Bridging The Seven Seas

John Prentice Langley

N.BRALEY

There came a deafening crash—and a burst of appalling black smoke.

(Bridging the Seven Seas) *(Page 148)*

BRIDGING THE SEVEN SEAS

OR

On the Air-Lane to Singapore

BY

JOHN PRENTICE LANGLEY

AUTHOR OF "TRAIL BLAZERS OF THE SKIES," "SPANNING THE PACIFIC," "MASTERS OF THE AIR-LANES," "AIR VOYAGERS OF THE ARCTIC," "DESERT HAWKS ON THE WING," "CHASING THE SETTING SUN," ETC.

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JOHN M. FOSTER

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BRIDGING THE SEVEN SEAS

CHAPTER I

STAGGERING DANNY

"Getting restless, I can see, Danny. I've a hunch now you don't fancy this Australian air as much as you expected to. How about it, old sea scout?"

"Hot dog! Amos, that was some wisecrack for you, all right. I'm 'bout filled up with this hick town they call Sydney, though there are some mighty fine people livin' here, I own up. But, all the same, I'm just a-yearnin' to be out on the crossroads of the sky once more, that's what."

"Buck up, buddy mine, it's most time for a kick-off any day now; when the wind seems favorable we're due to say good-by to our fine friend, Sir Thomas, and make a start westward ho!"

"Suits me, partner; you know I'd call this big country a bit *tame*—anyway, to such wide-world trotters as we've grown to be."

"But, Danny, you've had that hunt you'd been

looking forward to so long, with a good guide recommended by Sir Thomas."

Danny Cooper laughed sarcastically.

"Quite decent of the old top, to be sure, Amos; but I never got much of a kick out of that week's hunt, just the same, I'm tellin' the world."

"Still, you bagged your kangaroo, and a buster, too, they tell me, Danny; such as you'd been longing to knock over."

"Sure did, but never again. Say, d'ye know, old pal, the beast looked so harmless and so docile that after I'd bowled him over and he gave his last kick, I felt like I'd been practicin' on a domestic animal in some farmer's barnyard. No fun about such milk-and-water gunnin'. I want to see a crouchin' cougar ready to spring on me; or a fe-ro-cious lion comin' along with his big mouth stretched wide open, an' him roarin' to beat the band! Huh! no kangaroos need apply to Danny Cooper after this; just another fine dream busted like a toy balloon!"

"Oh! that's all in the game, partner," said Amos Green; "forget your troubles, and let's talk about what we expect to do on our jump from Sydney over the Seven Seas to Singapore."

"Slip me an easy one, buddy. Tell me what d'ye really mean by Seven Seas—does that take in all the big oceans of the world, I wonder?"

"Some people look at it that way," explained Amos; "but there are others who fasten the name

on the East Indian archipelago, with its numberless tropical islands and the salt water lying between. Look at your chart of that region around Java, Borneo and the rest—not counting such immense bodies of salt water as the China and Yellow Seas. You'll find more than half a dozen others all down on the map—count 'em, and see for yourself, Danny."

"Now I'll be hornswiggled if that ain't a fact, Amos, you old settler!"

"On our forthcoming trip, after we leave harbor on the far distant northwest tip of Australia, making our zigzag course as Mr. Carstairs advised us to do, so as to cover as much of these Spice Islands as possible, I figure that we'll pass over the Timor, Arafura, Banda, Flores, Java and South China Seas, also a fair stretch of the East Indian Ocean. Then besides there are others lying further north, like the Celebes and Sula Seas."

"Sounds all to the good, old-timer. I'm 'bout filled up with seein' endless stretches o' salt water down below and blue sky or clouds overhead; I want to glimpse dry land for a change. Always did hanker after a chance to set my tootsies on the island of Borneo, where I understand they have that chimpanzee so strong he c'n twist a bar of steel into a knot! On my word, I'd sooner meet up with such a ripsnorter of a beast, a holy terror of the tangle jungle, than a silly

high-jumper of a kangaroo that carries its whole family of kids in a skin pouch, an' whimpers like a sick baby."

"Is that so?" ventured Amos, scoffingly; "well, how about running smack on a squad of those bloodthirsty head-hunters, such as I understand can still be found in the wilds of Borneo—feel any sort of itching to have a bit of a shindy with those crazy fanatics?"

Danny scratched his shock of fiery red hair and grinned.

"Not so you could notice it, partner; small chance of our strikin' such royal game near the coast; an' of course we never dreamed of wanderin' away into the chapparel, or bush. They do say it's just sickenin' hot, and moist, day and night, in those countries right on the Equator; and like as not we'll be eaten alive with the monstrous skeeters they grow there, bred in the fresh-water lagoons, an' salty coves 'long the coast."

"We're all set for that sort of game, remember," Amos told him; "and by the way, that powdered root we used to such advantage, when up around the North Pole, to keep the nippers away, really came from the Malay States across the Malacca Straits from Singapore. I've got it along, and we can try it out on the home variety of the bug."

"When I take a bird's-eye look ahead, Amos, and try to reckon up how we're fixed to make this

hoppety-zippety trip over your Seven Seas, to the city on the Malacca Straits, and after that carry out the great flight over the Himalaya Mountain chain, which has never yet been really done—why, there's only one more thing I'm sincerely hopin' for."

"As what, tell me, Danny?"

"That before we break away on the last event Mr. Carstairs is able to fit us out with that new altimeter he was writing about lately, and which he says, as an old aviator, he believes is goin' to turn out a reg'lar wonder. We got one, that's true, but while she seems to be an improvement on our old machine, we don't look on it as ab-solutely perfect."

"I can guess what you're bothering about," said Amos, quickly; "you feel that up there at the top of the world, when we're passing over unknown places in Tibet, and then climbing to dizzy heights above the summits of the Himalaya sky-mountains, we may meet up with fogs, and get lost—in such times the possession of an absolutely true altimeter is beyond all price, for it may save lives, and prevent crashes among the unseen crags and pinnacles. Well, here's hoping we do get such a trustworthy instrument installed before we make *that* jump. You know how things break that way for us nearly every time."

"Sure, because we're watched by a little cherub aloft that I like to call the Amos Green Luck—

shake your head as you please, partner of mine, deep down in my heart I honestly do believe in it."

While holding this interesting little confab the two adventurous young American aviators could look away to the southwest and see the enterprising city of Sydney within easy range of their vision. Before them lay the harbor, where ocean-going vessels from all over the world came, and from which they departed; most of them, of course, floating the British naval or mercantile flag, since the vast continent of Australia is one of the Empire's dominions.

Amos and his side partner, Danny Green, had recently made a most remarkable air voyage in their reliable amphibian plane, jumping off from the California coast near San Diego; stopping briefly at Honolulu; then carrying on until the second leg of the great cruise ended at the Fiji Islands. After once more laying in fresh fuel and supplies they had finally reached Sydney, having beaten the historical record of the *Southern Cross,* made in the late summer of the preceding year, by one full day—seven, instead of eight!

Amos and Danny, former air-mail pilots along with Lindbergh on western routes but now protégés of a very wealthy gentleman whom they knew as Mr. Carstairs, had made some wonderful flights, which have been fully covered in the preceding volumes of this series, and will well repay

any reader interested in such happenings along the newest path of romance and adventure.

Mr. Carstairs, for a number of reasons, did not wish the public to get wind of these audacious flights; and in Amos Green he had found a bold spirit that shrank from publicity and hero worship, whose heart was so completely wrapped up in his work that he detested being noticed, and pointed at as anything out of the common run. At the same time, acting on orders from the "Big Boss" (as Danny facetiously called their generous backer), he invariably managed to secure positive proof that they had left their home port at such and such a time; and reached their objective, no matter how many thousands of miles distant, at another authenticated date, well within the limit that had been previously arranged.

So enthusiastic were the pair over their work that hardly had they attained the victory, after excessive perils, and exhausting labor, than their thoughts centered upon the next daring stunt on their program—such is ambitious and modern youth, never satisfied, but ever yearning for fresh fields of endeavor, and new worlds to conquer.

They had possession of a fine hangar situated within a few miles of the city, which Mr. Carstairs' good friend, Sir Thomas Lowden, at the time in the Government service and a man of considerable influence, had managed to secure for them, it being the property of a new and aspiring

flying group, having a hydroplane built especially for their service.

Whenever the pair wished to be in the city in company they had their valuable property guarded by an armed officer; even while it hardly seemed probable that any danger of robbery could hang over the isolated hangar, nevertheless Amos Green always worked in sympathy with his pet slogan of "preparedness," and declined to take any chances. All their plans for future enterprises must be bound up in the safety of that highly prized amphibian, known to them as *Old Glory II,* but which had no distinguishing mark on its fuselage, capable of betraying their secrets and making them an object of public curiosity. They could not omit any effort to effect the security of their plane, with its priceless complement of instruments, records, charts, and numberless other things so prized by enthusiastic aviators.

Danny, while lying there on the bank, and keeping up a continual flow of "talk" (for he chanced to be an unusually loquacious chap) looked suspiciously out of the tail of his eye from time to time, always in the direction of his beloved pal. After a longer spell of silence than usual he suddenly sat upright, and challenged the other to make a confession.

"You're a-hidin' somethin' up your sleeve, I know right well, old-timer," was his direct man-

ner of putting it; "an' I'm wantin' to know what's in the wind? So own up, and spill the beans—if its fair I should know about the thing you've got on your mind, eh, what?"

Amos chuckled as if vastly amused.

"I reckoned you smelled a rat, Danny," he admitted, "for I could see how you kept tabs on my face right along. Yes, I have got something great to tell you—it's been hard to hold back this long, but I wanted to enjoy having a real secret from you for once."

"Bet you *did* get a letter from the Boss this mornin' then, even if you kept so mum about it—how's that for a guess, buddy?"

"Hit the nail on the head that time, Danny—of course, I meant for you to read every word in it later on; but first of all I wanted to stun you with something he's told me for the first time."

"Now you're gettin' me all balled up, Amos. I sure do hope he ain't figgerin' on gettin' married, and losin' his interest in aviation stunts."

At that Amos laughed boisterously.

"You're away off your base, buddy. It's nothing so terrible as that! Fact is, what our fine backer has set down in writing happens to be of a kind to give you the biggest kick of your natural life."

"Hot dog! I sure hope now you're not kiddin' me, Amos—that this ain't a cut-out you're holdin' over my poor old coco."

"Danny, you ought to know me better than that. But perhaps the best thing I can do to set you straight is to read the last part of his letter out loud; after that I'll pass it along, and you can soak in all he says."

"Huh! luckiest thing for us that ever came down the pike, when you first met up with 'the Boss,' eh?"

"Oh! we've always agreed on that point, Danny. But listen, and hold your breath, for you're going to get the biggest thrill of your whole life."

"Shoot! Foxy Grandpa!" snapped the other, round-eyed and eager.

"'And now, my dear boys, I've arranged a couple of surprises to greet you when you finally drop down on the water of Malacca Straits before Singapore; though I'm leaving one of them until the hour of your safe arrival, when you'll know all. Be prepared to say good-by to *Old Glory II;* and ship the crate home to me; in place of your reliable pal-boat you will find awaiting you the finest and most reliable twin-motored amphibian, closed cabin and all, that has, up to date, been constructed. My conscience has reproached me many times, when I've visioned you two gallant lads, devoted to your first love, scientific aviation, venturing to brave the Arctic ice or the torrid heat of Equatorial deserts, with but a single motor between yourselves and eternity! That shall never, never happen again, I assure you. I prize your hearty coöperation, your unswerving

valor, your affection, too highly to risk everything on a single throw of the dice. Nothing has been left undone in the way of instruments, and the very latest practical discoveries designed to insure the safety of an air pilot's life. But you shall see for yourselves. Meanwhile may God watch over you, and guard you from all serious harm, is my constant prayer.

"'CARSTAIRS.'"

CHAPTER II

THE ALLURING PROSPECT AHEAD

It was certainly worth something to see the expression fixed upon the face of Danny Cooper when his pal finished reading that last section of the fat letter he had received from Mr. Carstairs, which of course must have been written a number of weeks previously since it takes considerable time for mail to travel from New York City all the way out to the antipodes at Sydney, Australia.

For a full minute neither of them spoke a single word, just sat there on the ground near the hangar sheltering their ship, and continued to stare. Then the spell that had been holding Danny's tongue suspended, and like the clapper of the college bell, roped by prank-loving students, it regained its vocal agility.

"Amos, didn't I always remark that he was an unqualified wow—a gent who knows his onions, if anybody does—a gate-crasher without his equal anywhere? I want to take off my hat to Mr. Carstairs, and say that he couldn't treat us whiter if we were his own kid brothers. Think of that—a twin-motored ship, with all the latest gewgaws aboard—mebbe some that are goin' to

make our eyes stick out like the lamps on these kewpee dolls! Hot dog! but it seems like a sweet dream to me—hope I don't wake up to find it only thin air—as that feller said in the book I was readin'—a mere figment of the imagination!"

Amos looked more than satisfied.

"It isn't that I love *Old Glory* any the less," he went on to explain, as if thinking some sort of apology might be necessary to account for his present bubbling joy; "but more and more as we've been on the go for days at a time, I've had it borne in on my mind how unnecessarily dangerous it was for us to be making all these long flights in a ship that boasted only a single engine. If something chanced to happen to the works when we were over the middle of the ocean—up near the North Pole—away off over the Soudan, or the Sahara—or flipping along above those South American jungles, nothing could ever have saved us. But when there are *two* motors to do the work, if one failed we could jog along on the other, crippled maybe, but able to keep afloat until some harbor showed up."

"It's scrumptious, that's what," gushed Danny, enraptured beyond expression; "an' I could just hug myself for gladness, only you'd make me out to be a ninny of an old hoot owl. Our first boat was properly called the *Pathfinder,* and well did she carry her name; then came the present ship, *Old Glory II;* and by

rights I reckon the new one ought to go under the name of *Adventure!* Can you beat that, Amos?''

''Sounds all right to me, partner; but then any old name goes if only the ship carries on like a perfect machine, easy in the mouth, and minding her business clockwork fashion. We'll have to put in some good licks learning the new ropes, for lots of things will seem queer to us after running single-engine boats all our flying days and nights.''

''And supplied with every known an' approved trick that science has been able to produce, he goes on to say, Amos; think of what that might mean, will you? We reckon we've got hold of some neat contraptions already; but it'd be just like Mr. Carstairs to poke around, an' hit on one or more fresh inventions that looked prime in his wise eyes, for he's an experienced pilot we've got to remember, carryin' that French valor medal for stunts he put through when on the war front, 'fore he was laid off with an injured arm.''

''That's going to give you something to think about, Danny,'' laughed the pilot, who knew his pal like a book, and how he would harp on any old mystery that engaged his interest, until the solution was reached in the wind-up.

''Yes,'' continued the other, unable to get his mind off the engrossing subject, ''and then you know he mentioned a *second surprise* that we

might expect when we struck that old burgh Singapore—now what d'ye imagine that might mean, eh?"

"Oh! any one of a dozen things I'd say, and let it go at that," replied the other; for Amos never allowed himself to be unduly taken up with regard to matters that were hardly of prime importance for the time being, his chief concern being to concentrate his mind on the subject of running his ship to the very best advantage, and leaving all else for the future to develop.

"I wonder now," pursued the other, who kept at a thing with extraordinary stubbornness when fully aroused, "if after all our talkin' 'bout that wonderful fog-piercin' ray that one of us meant to spring on the world, some wise guy's gone an' hit on the answer; think he might be meanin' to give us a jolt 'long those lines, old top?"

"As well that as anything else, Danny, because we happen to know there have been a wheen of smart inventors trying to get such a discovery into successful operation. For fifty years that's been the dream of lots of clever chaps, just as the old idea of perpetual motion used to drive cranks to despair, always tempting them, and then giving them the slip when they reckoned they had it lassoed dead sure."

"Huh!" Danny went on to say, reflectively, "there's that queer idea about havin' an emergency parachute—a whopper of a balloon to be

set free in case of the ship startin' to drop for a crash, an' which would ease her fall like—somethin' most too high-flown for me to take any stock in, but which *might* turn out a good grab after all."

"Keep it going, old pal; like as not you'll exhaust the entire line of aviation possibilities before you see Singapore, and learn what it's all about. I never could swallow that scheme myself, and gave it little thought; for it struck me such a colossal parachute would be apt to take up heaps of room, and be a great nuisance aboard a ship with cockpits already crowded."

"Gee whiz! a *real* cabin for us lucky goofs—somethin' to make things more comfy when we take that dash over the high Himalayas; an' also shelter us from the big storms we often strike when on our whiz-bang way—sounds all to the good to me, I'm tellin' the world! Oh! what a man! what a man!"

"Here's the letter, old scout. Read it at your leisure and just tell yourself we're the luckiest chaps ever to have found such a friend and backer. I wouldn't change places with anybody else on earth, so long as we can have our pick of these wonderful stunts he thinks up for us."

"I'll hold it for a bit, Amos, so I c'n enjoy it a dozen times over while we're waitin' to jump off from this dull old town; outside the movies I don't seem to find much to interest me, for even

the eats don't hold a candle to what we'd get over in good old San Diego at our favorite grub house."

"You're sure a queer chump, Danny, to say such a thing; I reckon it's your disappointment about that kangaroo hunt that has soured you on Australia. You expected too much, seems like. Now as for me, I've run across a heap of mighty interesting things out here, and I'll always be glad we came along. Besides, we certainly have met up with a jolly chap in Sir Thomas, who's been so kind and obliging in every way possible for an old bachelor to be."

"You said it, partner, he's a sure enough jimdandy, all wool, an' a yard wide, just like the man he makes us think of, Sir Thomas Lipton, an' an Irish baronet besides, in the bargain. Well, what's next on the program—an early supper, an' then to see our friend Tom Mix do his stuff at the Silver Screen Playhouse?"

"Anything to pass the time away, Danny, for like you I'm commencing to get tired of this monotony."

"Tired? Hot dog! I'm gettin' in a bit of a tail spin from loafin' around day after day, an' the weather so prime for flyin', too. There are times when I feel like just breakin' loose, and *yellin'*, like the old-time cowboys used to do when they rushed the town after pay day, for their

monthly jag. If somethin' don't break loose soon I'll bust my b'iler a-tryin' to hold in."

"Ease up a bit, now that you've got something real and big to grip your attention. The *Adventure,* eh? Well, I seem to like that name more and more, buddy; and it was next door to an inspiration for you to strike it off so slick, without thinking twice, I'd say. Some of our old air-mail chums would say it hits the bull's-eye in the center; for haven't we been chasing the big thrill for going on two years now—and finding it by chunks?"

"Say, your mention of that old crowd of ginks makes me remember I forget to tell you somethin' that happened when I was over in town this afternoon to lay in some wool socks, so as to keep my tootsies warm an' comfy when we're spinnin' along over the top o' the world, an' crossing that nasty Himalaya Divide around Tibet. Some chap grabbed me by the arm, an' rememberin' how I'd had a confidence man do the same to me in New York I started to tell him to lay off that stuff, when I saw his face. Think of meetin' old Luther Fairbanks, one of the San Diego crowd, away off here at the other end of the world!"

CHAPTER III

A TROUBLE-MAKER

"That's news I don't quite like to hear, Danny," was the quick way Amos greeted the information disclosed by his comrade; and at the same time a cloud settled down on his face, as though he deemed it a serious situation for fellows who were bent on keeping their movements a dead secret.

Danny looked surprised.

"Say, now, what does it matter if that old bloke does bob up out here; he isn't on *our* trail, and we needn't bother lookin' him up at all, Amos."

"All I can say about it is that of the whole bunch we used to train with, this same Lute Fairbanks is about the last I'd want to bump up against just now—that's a fact, Danny."

"Why, what does he know about our doin's, and why should he bother his head whether we're here in Sydney or in old San Diego, tell me, buddy?"

"Stop and think, and you'll begin to understand why I feel that way," said Amos, soberly. "You'll agree with me that Lute was the most persistent chap we had among the air-pilot bunch

—a regular bulldog when it came to closing his teeth on anything, and holding on, come what might. A smart flyer to be sure, few better; but with some nasty traits about him that made the man mighty unpopular. Recollect that, Danny?"

"Sure, now that you mention the fact," replied the other, instantly; "for one thing he was the nosiest galoot that ever lived, always eager to poke into other people's business, and root along, just like a big hog turnin' over the sod in search of grubs. Got into lots of rows over that weakness. Some of the boys told him he ought to've been a Government detective, pickin' up bootleggers, an' smugglers of Chinks across the Mexican border."

"You said it that time, Danny; it's that queer fad of his I had in mind when I remarked I'd sooner have met any other man we know rather than this Lute Fairbanks."

"Yes, and a windy blowhard to boot; even givin' us a hint that he was related to our Doug, whose doin's on the screen have been one of our chief delights. Course we sized him up as a champion liar; but he stuck to his story just the same. Now I wonder what *he's* doin' away off here in the land of the high-kickin' kangaroo and the bushman?"

"That's something we know nothing about," Amos continued; "but reading between the lines of what you said about that meeting I'm per-

suaded Lute's actions showed his old-time interest in a thing that had got him guessing—what *we* might be doing out here—tell me, how about that, Danny boy?"

"Now that you mention it, partner, I remember he did ask a heap of pointed questions, which of course I let pass by, givin' him no satisfaction whatever—'cept to understand we represented a going concern in the States, and hoped to graft a few big sales of aviation stuff on these folks out here. I don't know whether Lute fell for the game or not; but he did say he expected to see a heap more of us while the visitin' held good."

"Just what I feared," snapped Amos, gloomily; "meeting up with you aroused that old fad of his, and raised it to fever heat. Now we'll have him on our backs like an old Canada lynx, bound to tear off the wool, and learn what there is underneath. Too bad we can't be left alone to mind our own affairs; so many fellows these days are bent on showing up others, and making themselves mighty nasty in doing it."

"Just the same I'm goin' to tell him where he gets off, next time I run across the old wharf rat; though I did have an idea I'd like to poke him up and find out what he's doin' in Sydney, you know."

"Take care what you say, Danny, for if you do that you're exposing yourself to the same charge

we're making against Lute. His business doesn't concern us a mite, so far as I can see. First thing we know he'll be poking around here, and then be putting things together, to spill the beans for us in great shape. Well, this is going to mean we'll be skipping out a bit sooner than we figured on doing, that's all."

On hearing his chum make this remark Danny grinned cheerfully, which was evidence that the departure could not come any too soon to please him. And then, as if to prove that Luther Fairbanks was not the only one who had a particular fad, Danny went on to say:

"But the Boss mentioned *two* surprises for us, and only told 'bout one; now I'm wonderin' what the other c'n be—somethin' *great,* that's sure, 'cause our Big Brother always does things that way. I'll keep a-turnin' things over in my mind till I strike pay dirt."

"Well, let's think of going after our supper, and then taking a look-in at Tom Mix and his crowd," suggested Amos. "In the morning we'll have a little confab, and try to settle our plans for pulling out."

"Gee whiz! I sure hope it c'n be arranged inside of a day or two, old scout, 'cause I'm getting mighty sick of layin' 'round, eatin' and sleepin', when the weather looks so invitin' for a nice run over the Seven Seas you talk about."

"It could be done, I reckon, on a pinch," was

all Amos would say; but it was sufficient to cause the navigator to grin, and nod his head eagerly, under the conviction that his chum was coming around to be just as impatient as himself.

Amos would not start for the city until the watchman, whom they had employed through Sir Thomas, arrived to take charge; indeed it struck Danny that he was more concerned about this than had been the case at any previous time; which doubtless could be laid to the fact of Luther Fairbanks' presence in Sydney.

Danny had discovered a new restaurant which he was eager to try out, remarking that he was a bit "soured" on the menu they had been staring at for the past week and more, so that possibly a change in fare would be beneficial all around. Amos raised no objection, doubtless being accustomed to these frequent changes engineered by his mate; indeed, he seemed a bit absent-minded just then, as though pondering over certain matters that might be more or less serious.

They chatted over their meal, but as others were in the near vicinity not a word was said of their plans or past actions. In their ordinary clothes there was nothing to indicate that they were other than citizens of Sydney, so that they attracted no particular attention.

Danny looked as though he had come upon the elixir of life, for his face fairly radiated good

cheer; no longer could he complain of dullness with the hour approaching for their take-off; and besides, having that mystery of the unsolved second surprise awaiting their arrival at the city on the Malacca Straits to sustain him with its tantalizing possibilities.

After finishing their supper they sauntered around to the playhouse, in front of which could be seen the highly colored placard referring to the fresh treat awaiting all admirers of the redoubtable Tom Mix, in the presentation of his newest film triumph, just out from Hollywood.

Danny was anticipating a couple of hours' keen enjoyment when he entered the movie theater; but circumstances that he did not suspect were making for a different outcome.

They groped their way to seats and commenced to take an interest in the unrolling of the screen play of the Wild West in which the versatile Tom was really at his best. Somehow, seeing the familiar landscape over which so much of their daily trips as air-mail pilots had occurred pleased both Americans particularly. It was as though an invisible tie connected them with the dear homeland; and for the time being they quite forgot the many thousands of miles of sea that lay between, all of which they had just recently passed over in making their amazing three-jump flight. *

It was about half an hour after they had en-

* See preceding volume, *Chasing the Setting Sun.*

tered that Amos felt a hand poking him in the ribs; and as Danny sat on his right he had no difficulty in connecting the probe with that individual.

"Hey! Amos, bend down a bit, will you. I want to tell you somethin' that might be *important.* Look ahead at the third row just in front—see that geezer with the upstanding ruff of stiff hair—that's *him,* our old friend Lute. He knows we're back here, in the bargain, 'cause I saw him squintin' this way an' grinnin' to beat the band when the screen lighted up for a minute with that prairie fire blazin'."

"I don't like that at all, Danny," said the other, without hesitation; "and we'll do well to make a sneak at the first chance we get, so's to clear out."

CHAPTER IV

THE SKIPPER DECIDES TO CHECK OUT

Of course that took all the pleasure out of the picture for Danny, much to his deep regret. He nursed a deep-seated grievance against the cause of their hasty departure from the movie theater, when things were just warming up so nicely, with Tom getting in his greatest work. Still, Amos knew best, and Danny was accustomed to leaning on the decisions of his pal.

When later on Amos gave him a little knock he knew it was saying good-by to those delightful moments for perhaps a long time. He could only hope the spirit of enterprise had also gripped the Dutch burghers of Batavia, on the island of Java, where they planned to stop for supplies; also at Singapore, the journey's end, so that they too would have screen triumphs from the vast gristmill out at Hollywood in sunny California.

There chanced to be a brief period of near darkness. Danny fancied it was in keeping with the coming of a furious storm, in which Tom Mix was to rescue the lovely heroine from the camp of the bandits. At any rate the gloom

corresponded with Danny's injured feelings as he groped his passage along to the aisle and followed his pal to the outer air.

"Wonder now if that boozer noticed us leavin' our seats, Amos?" was the first thing Danny said, as they found themselves hurrying off in the direction of salt water.

"Don't know, but hardly think so," was the noncommittal response the other threw him.

"Such a per-sis-tent chump as he is—did his best to start tellin' me he had somethin' *real nice* to whisper in my ear, an' that I sure must let him have a chance to get the load off his chest; but I was right wary, knowin' his tricks as I do; so I kept sayin' I was in some hurry then, an' if he'd excuse me mebbe the chance would come along later. Course I knew Lute was only bent on buzzin' me, an' meanin' to extract all the information possible, so as to play us some dirty trick, hang him!"

So they presently arrived at the place where they kept the little motor boat when in the city on various errands. They saw no signs of being spied upon while unlocking the boat and starting the motor; once clear of the dock Danny breathed easier; he had conceived such a dread of being "buzzed" as he called it, by that stormy petrel of an ex-air-mail pilot, that a load was taken off his mind when they had put some little distance between the shore and themselves.

"Hey! what does this mean, partner?" he observed suddenly; "Must have got your location a bit twisted up, I reckon. Our camp lies off there to the left, I'd say at a guess."

"Sure thing, old sea scout—know that as well as you do—making a little *detour,* so if anybody happened to be listening to the knocking of this old motor they'd get a wrong idea as to where we are bound."

"Good enough!" snapped Danny, chuckling as if amused; "takes a smart dickey like my pal to think of such stunts. Breeze is offshore right now, and soon this chuggin' sound will die away; after which we c'n make a neat swing to labboard, an' fetch up all standin' at the home camp. Guess Lute'll have to get up pretty early in the mornin' to ketch us weasels asleep. Fine work, Boss."

It was not long afterwards when Amos followed out that identical plan, and making a wide, half circuit, headed directly for their destination, marked as the anchorage was by a near-by patch of eucalyptus trees.

Once ashore they proceeded to make themselves comfortable, after dismissing the trusty guard who had been so warmly recommended by Sir Thomas, the friend of Mr. Carstairs.

Danny was more than usually loquacious, and asked innumerable questions, some of which Amos brushed aside, saying he had no means just

then for answering them; they must be left to the future for a solution.

"Well, anyhow, I'm goin' to start a bit of a fire, and set on the coffeepot," Danny went on to say; for he was actually voracious when it came to indulging in his passionate fondness for good coffee, which nowadays he took "black," without even the usual accessory of sugar; and hardly a night had passed since their arrival at the antipodes but that the battered old aluminum coffeepot had been in commission. Somehow it did not seem to affect Danny's sleep in the least; whereas his mate seldom indulged, save under unusual conditions, for coffee started his brain to working, and thus prevented sound rest.

There was a half moon and the night seemed to hold a fair promise; to the south the dazzling Southern Cross stood boldly out, as though its stars might be so many diamonds of the skies. Danny stepped to the edge of the water once or twice, giving no reason for so doing; but Amos knew very well the uneasy navigator was listening, in order to learn whether any small motor boat could be crossing the harbor, and heading their way.

Somehow Danny's thoughts on this particular night seemed to be roving back to a certain wonderful event that had previously stirred him up to fever heat. Amos had, it seemed, been keeping a secret from him during the whole of

their late air passage from the California coast up to their arriving at Sydney seven days later.

This turned out to be a letter Amos had received just before they hopped off, from a young cousin of his pal, telling him that her father, Danny's crabbed Uncle Rufus had passed on, leaving a will that disinherited his only child, Kate, because she had married against his wishes; and leaving every dollar of his estate—something like fifty thousand in all—to his nephew, Danny Cooper, who most cordially detested the old miser even as the other had seemed to dislike him.

Danny had immediately burst out in denunciation of the aged skinflint's meanness in thus cutting off his daughter and her husband. Loudly had Amos's pal declared that nothing under heaven could ever tempt him to accept a single dollar of that legacy. He even took immediate measures to see that Cousin Kate got her rights. He made his will in her favor, sent a duplicate of it to a lawyer friend of his in Texas, with instructions to have the ranch and everything else turned over to the young couple, and even went to heavy expense to cable Kate to that effect.

"I sure do hope little Katie got that cablegram o' mine," he was saying, as he sipped his drink contentedly, "also that Lawyer Kinsey receives that fat packet I mailed him, insured so it

wouldn't go astray. Gee whiz! but mebbe I wouldn't like to see that little girlie's sweet face when she reads my cable? I just remembered that when last I wrote to her I *did* say somethin' 'bout our meanin' to slip away, bound for this other side o' the world; which news she wasn't to hint to a livin' soul, save mebbe her hubby. An' now I understand just why all these happenings keep on pesterin' me, to-day of all times. Would you b'lieve it, Amos, that bulldog of a Lute Fairbanks bobbin' up like a jack-in-the-box must have started things goin'—sure, pop!"

"You'll have to explain that to me, Danny, old boy. Whatever could he have to do with your family relations. You never told me that he knew your Uncle Rufus, or his daughter Kate?"

"Well, he did, all right: happened to come from a little ranch town where my uncle got his mail; but then that has nothin' to do with matters. Be sure he wa'n't the critter Kate's dad wanted her to hitch up with. So you see runnin' across old Lute over here must 've stirred things up again in my silly coco, an' just when I was gettin' to let 'em lie quiet like. But say, partner, tell me, please, have you settled on any plan for a quick get-away?"

Amos smiled, knowing all along how this pertinent question had been on the tip of his chum's ready tongue.

"We might as well say good-by to Sir Thomas

and this place, for things are beckoning us on, with plenty of fresh scenes and exciting happenings waiting for us to strike them. So to-morrow we'll get a move on, and load up—I'll tackle my customary stunt of checking the machine—motor, wings, struts and all the instruments, to make sure everything is in apple-pie condition; while you handle the job of laying in the supplies—gas, oil, food, and anything we'll be apt to need between here and Dutch Batavia."

"Bully—bully all around!" exclaimed the overjoyed Danny, jumping up to cut a few capers that might have done credit to any old medicine man of darkest Africa, spinning around in the carrying out of his necromancy along the line of hypnotising his wretched, dark-skinned dupes.

"That being the case you can take it for granted your loafing times are over, at least for the present; because to-morrow promises to be a day of hustle and bustle with us; since at sundown things must be in readiness for an early take-off before peep of dawn."

"Glory be! but won't old Lute just gnash his teeth when he finds we're on the wing again, headin' nobody knows where but ourselves and the Big Boss? Thought he'd have me guessin' what his news was goin' to be, did he? Well, I may be an easy mark, but not always, bet your boots. He'll have to own up I saw his lead, and went him one better."

That idea appeared to give Danny a vast amount of satisfaction, to judge from the way he kept chuckling, as though gloating over the coming disgust of his one-time fellow air-mail carrier across the Rockies.

Possibly suspicious Danny had some hazy sort of notion they might after all meet up with adventure before another dawn arrived; but if so that impending shadow did not keep him from sleeping soundly once he had passed into the realm of dreams.

So the auspicious day broke, with a further promise of smiling skies, and no sign of any storm visible—a condition of affairs that could not last too long to suit Danny, who loathed dirty weather, especially when about to embark on some difficult undertaking in which fog and mist would be apt to prove most uncomfortable, not to say dangerous.

After enjoying a breakfast equal to any, Danny —who called himself a fair camp *chef*—had ever "slung," to entice the appetites of his best pal and himself, the business of the day was started. Amos donned his dingy dungarees, as his share of the work promised to be more or less oily and greasy; he was soon making fair headway, but not hurrying a particle, it being his universal habit to do a job *thoroughly,* no matter how much time and energy went into the same; and why not when human lives depended on the outcome?

Meanwhile Danny got ready to motor away to the city to make his purchases, first acquainting Sir Thomas concerning their sudden decision, so he could run over that evening in his own power boat, and say good-by, as well as send a warm message to his friend Mr. Carstairs; and next start the supplies coming along.

CHAPTER V

DANNY HAS A SHOCK

THROUGHOUT the entire morning Amos kept diligently at his self-imposed task. No mechanic could have done a more thorough job of checking every inch of the plane, from engine to wing tips. When they chose to start on their crooked route to the Malacca Straits *Old Glory II* would be in absolutely perfect condition if continued energy and particular pains could accomplish such a thing.

And Danny, too, shouldered his share of the business with splendid judgment and dispatch. He had long ago fashioned his plan of campaign, and had a list of the things that were to be accomplished in the way of buying supplies, and seeing that they were promptly delivered and properly stowed in the plane.

First of all he went to the post office to pick up any mail that might have arrived since the previous day. Next he called upon Sir Thomas at his elegant bachelor apartments—here they had been wonderfully entertained and feasted on several occasions—and explained to that gentleman how circumstances had suddenly arisen calling for

their hasty departure from Sydney, bound for the next port of call.

He assured Danny that he was deeply disappointed, since he was even then laying out a round of enjoyable experiences for the pair of young and enterprising American airmen; but to be sure he would run over after supper, and spend an evening in their delightful company, as well as wish them a hearty *bon voyage.*

Next Danny saw the people from whom they had been securing such gas and oil as they needed while in Sydney; as they had made it a point to keep a goodly supply on hand, it required only a comparatively small addition to fill their tanks to the brim, and also allow of a number of those convenient five-gallon tins to be stowed aboard in convenient nooks.

So, too, was the oil supply to be replenished, that being one of the several absolute necessities upon which continued flying depends.

When it came to food Danny was in his element; though he stubbornly resisted any temptation to load up with luxuries; Spartan diet must rule when they were on the wing. Of course a sufficient quantity must be provided, so as to cover emergencies; but he grimly drew his pencil through several enticing notations that he had jotted down while in a prodigal spirit, but which meant unnecessary additional weight and occupied space.

Having accomplished all this Danny hastened back to camp, and arrived just as the oil truck came humming along the near-by road. Consequently he was on hand to see to the business, which repeated similar services had made an old story with Danny. In his own language he well might call himself a "reg'lar old bear cat at loadin' a plane to the sky limit."

Noon found all his labor accomplished, though Amos still had a part of his particular job awaiting attention. Of course Danny knew to a fraction of a pound just what weight of stuff he had stowed away; and with his previous figures could arrive at a complete understanding what sort of load they were asking the amphibian to raise from the water when the supreme moment arrived. It would be awkward to say the least, if through an error of judgment, when Pilot Amos tried to lift her, after attaining considerable momentum, the task was found impossible of fulfillment.

The latter part of the day was consumed in lolling around at their ease, with Danny figuring on the *menu* he meant to spring upon Sir Thomas, who sent word over during the afternoon that he had been able to defer a certain important engagement, and would thus be able to join them at a camp supper. This fact gave him much more pleasure than words could tell, since the coming of these two bright young Yankees had taken him back to his own younger sporting days, and

had afforded him a vast amount of gratification.

He arrived in good time, and Danny did himself great credit in the appetizing spread he placed before their honored guest. They chatted about innumerable subjects, in which the recent amazing achievements in aviation formed the principal topic. It proved to be a sociable evening that neither of the visitors in Sydney would be likely to forget. The Irish baronet was such a delightful chap, so full of jokes and rare good humor that his company was a treat indeed.

"And by the way," he remarked, when about to take his departure at a comparatively early hour, realizing that if the pair expected to get away at peep of dawn they should not stay up too long, "before I leave you I must mention a fact that I imagine may have something to do with your quitting camp so suddenly."

"Hot dog! Sir Thomas," burst out the indignant Danny, "don't tell us now that sly boob, Luther Fairbanks, has been givin' *you* some of his hot air, just to learn where we had our camp located, eh, what?"

"It must have been the same party," the other admitted; "I did not see him myself, but he ingratiated himself into the company of the engineer on my motor boat, and I'm fain to believe managed to pick up a few clews to inform him of this camp of yours—said he was an old pal of you both—used to fly in the same batch of air-mail

carriers over in California; and had something of *great importance* to communicate! I fear he impressed Johnston enough to draw out the information he wanted, and that possibly to-morrow, if you were still held here, you would be apt to have him for a visitor. Deuced sorry, and all that, you know—wouldn't have had it happen for a hundred pun; but my man isn't as close-mouthed as one might wish—rather given to falling under a spell of soft blarney."

"Don't let that give you the slightest concern, Sir Thomas," Amos went on to say, smilingly; "when he comes along it will likely be to find the nest empty and the birds flown."

"The dirty old hoot owl!" grunted disgusted Danny. "Makes me boil over to think of *him* ever botherin' himself to fetch good news to any chap alive. He never did think of a single soul 'cept one Lute Fairbanks; an' nothin' could be too good for that sneakin' critter. Bah! if he came along before we pulled our freight I'd just be tempted to give him one good hard punch in the snoot for luck, an' call it quits!"

After their good friend had gone the boys lay around for a brief time, until finally Amos announced he was meaning to "hit the hay."

"We ought to get as much decent sleep to-night as possible, remember, Danny, because we don't know what we may be up against when another sun drops out of sight. If our plans carry we'll

find an anchorage on some river halfway over to the western shore of the big continent; and for all we know may have to sit up all night, keeping watch for fear we are boarded by an army of those ferocious, hard-fighting kangaroos you tell about!"

"Ah! bolony! You're tryin' to josh me, old partner," said Danny, with one of his wide grins.

He bothered himself not a particle concerning how they were to tell when it was time to awaken, and secure a bite of breakfast before moving the laden amphibian cloud-chaser from the hangar into the water—all that he knew could be safely left to his capable chum, who had a peculiar faculty of rousing at any time he chose to impress upon his mind before turning in.

So Danny understood that the night must be well spent when he felt a hand gently shaking him. The moon had long since set and complete darkness lay upon land and water. Instinctively Danny glanced up at the star-studded heavens; and being well acquainted with those luminaries of the southern zones he understood that the hour must be something close on the first peep of coming dawn.

They had left as little as possible to be completed, knowing the value of time; so Danny hurried to get his coffee boiling, for he meant to fill up the prized thermos jug first of all, making a second brewing for their immediate consumption.

Neither of them feeling especially hungry they ate only a "snack" for breakfast, washing this down with the cheering coffee. Then the remaining few things were stowed away in the places reserved for their occupancy; after which Amos took a last look around to make certain that not the slightest article had been forgotten.

"Deck's cleared in great shape, partner," he announced; "and last of all we'll run the boat out on the float so as to launch her."

"Look here, Amos; gimme your opinion of this thing. There's a craft over yonder—you c'n hear her 'cut-cut-cut' exhaust plain as day; an' by the great horn spoon she seems to be headin' this way in the bargain!"

"That may mean something for a fact, old sea scout," admitted the other, as he stepped over alongside his chum. "That's right, whatever sort of craft she happens to be, she certainly *is* coming toward us, and at a hot speed too—there's some sort of searchlight mounted in her bow, so that it throws a ray all the way across the water, and shows up the side of our hangar like fun. Come, we've got to get a move on, buddy, and launch our ship in a hurry."

"Ten chances to one it's some more o' that skunk's mixin' up with our private affairs," grumbled Danny; but he was at the heels of his comrade when Amos threw wide open the double doors of the club hangar, so as to enable them to

start the amphibian down the grade to the water.

They always kept the runway clear, so that it was an easy task to get the wide-winged sea and air craft launched; and only a comparatively few minutes was needed to accomplish this feat; after which both climbed aboard, and Danny worked to paddle the boat a little distance away, so that nothing might impede her start.

"Comin' on like a rocket, that's what, Amos!" called out the navigator in considerable excitement, as the bright beam of light hovered around them, proclaiming that those aboard the mysterious craft must be fully aware of their suspicious movements, announcing an intended speedy departure.

Amos had already started his engine, which was making a great racket; since apparently there was no possible necessity for them to try to conceal their intention to take off. Now the amphibian had commenced to move through the water, although the speed boat was steadily shortening the distance separating the two crafts. Faster still they rushed along, with the dimly seen pursuer keeping aggressively on their tail.

Then Danny felt a sensation well understood, telling him his pal at the stick was lifting his craft. Gallantly she responded to his touch. They were off the boiling surface of the harbor, and commencing to ascend, when Danny, straining his ears, heard above the roar of motor and

whirr of propeller a stentorian voice, that could belong only to big Lute Fairbanks, evidently shouting through some sort of megaphone. He caught parts of what was bellowed:

"You Danny Cooper, little piker—listen—Cousin Kate said—ran across you out here anywhere—tell you Unc Rufe left you all—dirty money—get that, do you, kid—go back home and live like lord—makes me sick you givin' me the air like this—*blah!*—go long with you, crazy loon!"

CHAPTER VI

ON THEIR WAY

The voice through the megaphone continued to sound, but that was all Danny understood, owing to the fact that Amos was heading the boat up toward the brightening skies; and the clamor of motor exhaust as well as whirling propeller caused Lute Fairbanks's parting salute to become a confused howl, gradually dying away.

Danny was stricken as near dumb as he had ever been in all his life. Talk about a sudden shock—he had been the recipient of a crushing blow, as if from the swinging trunk of an old rogue elephant tusker on the rampage in the wilds of blackest Africa.

He found himself wondering whether his comrade could have made any sense of what the ex-air-mail-pilot had howled after them. Mechanically Danny adjusted the head harness connected with their cabin telephone outfit; meaning in an uncertain way to find out about Amos's translation of the strange jargon. Perhaps his ears had proved treacherous and after all he had quite misunderstood what Lute had shouted at the top of his voice.

Meanwhile Amos had attained such elevation as he wished for the present, and having swung around in a half circuit, now straightened out on a course that took them due northwest.

Danny turned to look back, still feeling queer after having endured such a terrific slap in the face, figuratively speaking. Not the slightest sign could he see of the coast city, which he knew very well must lie in their wake, blanketed in the darkness that preceded dawn on the surface of the earth.

Back in the east the heavens were already beginning to give notice that the day god, old Phoebus, was coming up toward the horizon, to start another trip to the zenith, and beyond; over in the west on the other hand there was but a faint indication of the night's passing.

Danny gave his pal a significant punch, and pointed to his ear phones, as if to acquaint the other of a pressing desire to make some communication of importance. Understanding the sign language Amos readily relinquished the controls for a minute while he adjusted his own end of the connecting wire.

"I'll take the stick again, now, Danny—shoot!" he told his mate.

"Er—it *was* Lute, of course, partner?" queried Danny, cautiously breaking the ice.

"No question about that," affirmed Amos, positively.

"He sure *did* shout after us like a wild hyena, didn't he, Amos?"

"Some voice he's got—pity he didn't take to the auctioneer trade—or pick up the line of a freak barker; for Coney Island never saw a better whoop-her-up crowd coaxer!"

"Did you—er, happen to get the drift of his—er—complimentary remarks meant for one Little Danny Cooper?"

"Picked up snatches of his talkfest; didn't seem to fancy your skipping out in such a hurry, without giving him a chance to fetch you a message, eh, Danny boy?"

So Amos had heard enough to understand what it was all about! Danny felt that there was now no further need of keeping things back.

"Gosh! I'm knocked all in a heap, old pal; couldn't believe my own ears—right now it seems like I must have been dreamin'. He knows about Uncle Rufe's kickin' off—likewise of that silly old will leavin' me the boodle,—Katie begged him if he happened to run across me anywhere out here to break the sad news to me softlike, so as not to gimme too big a shock. An' to think o' all I've been a-sayin' 'bout old Lute—if we were on solid ground I'd feel like askin' *some*body to gimme a right decent kick—just shows how big a fool a feller c'n make o' himself sometimes."

Amos knew just how humiliated his chum must

be feeling; therefore, to buoy up the sinking spirits of Danny he went on to say encouragingly:

"Perfectly all right for you to think as you did, buddy, seeing that you had no way of sizing up the truth. On my part I'm tickled to know Lute's got *some* decent streaks in his make-up! Guess lots of lads are a bit better than folks think. Tell me all you caught of his whoopee, Danny."

So Danny repeated the broken sentences just as they chanced to come to his strained hearing. Every word was indelibly impressed upon his brain, never to be forgotten. Amos heard him through, and then laughed as though amused.

"Well, well, old Lute did find the nest empty, for a fact. I wonder why he was coming off so early in the morning. Seems to me he must have picked up some information from that gullible Johnston, to hint at a quick jump-off on our part; and hoped to beat us to it. But it's all right, and you needn't bother your head about what he said."

"It knocks me silly to learn how that bush-leaguer ain't such a hard-boiled egg after all. Just to think how he was goin' to all that trouble —and expense—so's to do me a favor on Katie's account—wasn't meanin' to stick his nose in our private affairs a tall! Huh! makes me feel some small, partner, that's a fact—I reckon this lesson's a-goin' to make me go slow 'bout always

seein' the worse side o' other ginks—they do say that even the old Nick can't be *quite* as black as he's painted. Shucks! what a sell on Little Danny."

As Amos failed to invite further conversation upon the subject Danny lapsed into silence. He realized that just then there were too many important matters crowding in his companion's brain for him to give further consideration to Lute Fairbanks, and his surprising change of base; later on, perhaps when they were lying in some queer old tropical camp, and resting up after the fatigue incident to a scorching day aloft, it might be safe to broach the subject again and thresh it all out.

Amos, with the rising of the sun, began to figure on his exact course, which must be continued, wind and weather permitting, through the entire flight of two days. Lying before them was an immense stretch of virgin territory that must be covered ere they found themselves at the northwest point of the Australian continent. There being no need of any undue haste, Amos had figured on breaking the monotonous journey by dropping down sometime in the afternoon, and anchoring upon some promising stream that would afford them safe lodging for a night.

He had marked several points on his chart, and if only this later was fairly correct there would be but little difficulty encountered. Even if they

decided to make "three bites to a cherry," and take things slowly, it would bring about no difference in their ultimate plan of campaign.

They were now flying over the country back of Sydney, which was a bit familiar to them, since they had taken occasional jaunts for recreation while resting up in the coast city.

Danny busied himself with some of his numerous duties, and seemed to have temporarily at least banished that recent queer experience from his mind, for he showed his customary exuberance of spirits, and when exchanging an occasional remark with his chum gave no sign of brooding.

So an hour—two of them—passed, with the boat continually snoring on its course, and speeding through space like a vast roc of ancient days, keeping up its constant roaring, calculated to appal such wild beasts as might have their hunting grounds in the forests below.

Then, remembering how he had neglected his pet hobby—staring down through his binoculars at the panorama exhibited to their gaze—the navigator put away his charts, suspended all operations for a brief time, and gave himself up to the joy of observing.

It was not always dense forest land upon which he gazed. At times the wild scenery changed, and he found himself staring at ground very like those well-remembered plains of his own Wild

West; or it might be a vast stretch of sandy desert, lonely, and apparently deserted by human kind.

How familiar it all seemed, the tract of sand stretching from horizon to horizon, sparsely covered with vegetation such as Danny had often seen over in Arizona—yucca, prickly pear, cactus and greasewood—it struck him that deserts, when encountered in similar latitudes, must resemble one another very much indeed; and Danny ought to know something about them, since he and his beloved pal had flown across the great Sahara in their air voyage from Algiers on the Mediterranean to Cape Town in Southern Africa.

Those forests, however, did look most mysterious in his eyes; he scanned them eagerly in hopes of discovering some species of skulking wild beasts; or possibly a bunch of the notorious woolly-headed bushboys, whose valor in battle, with their primitive weapons in the shape of crude, sharp-pointed spears, and the tricky boomerangs, had been mentioned in considerable of the native literature with which he had been mentally feeding himself ever since making land on the big continent nestling in the cradle of the Pacific and Indian oceans.

Danny had as yet to see his first bushboy, since none of the aborigines were encountered during that memorable hunt in kangaroo-land; not that he actually hankered after a real contact with

the blacks, for every time he remembered it was said they were in the habit of putting venomous poison on the tips of their spears—or was it on their arrow points?—it sent a shudder racing up and down his backbone; still, he hoped to get a glimpse of the natives as they passed over some settlement, with Amos making a circling flight well above reach of their novel weapons.

It had been an unusually early morning start, and long before the hour of noon arrived Danny began to feel ferociously hungry—an old habit of his, by the way, and of which he never seemed to be one whit ashamed. Accordingly he got out the "eat-box," and helped himself to a fat roast beef sandwich, a quantity of which had been laid in so as to satisfy their needs. Flanked by an aluminum cup filled with hot coffee from the thermos jug, he took keen delight in banishing the horrid vacuum that had been bothering him for at least a full hour.

Since as a rule Amos never did feel half so hungry as himself, it had become a settled rule that Danny was to slake his thirst, and satisfy that persistent demand of his stomach for staying food, before taking over the controls and giving his chum a turn.

Everything seemed to be moving along with clocklike fidelity; the motor never missed a single throb, nor did the spinning propeller slacken in its dazzling performance of so many revolutions

per minute—all of which was sweet music in the ears of the two adventurers, knowing as they did that this continuous performance spelled safety for them—safety, and "getting there with both feet," as Danny liked to say once in a while.

Noon passed, and now it was well along in the afternoon; indeed, Danny fancied from the questions asked by his pal that Amos must be expecting to locate presently the river where they hoped to drop down and pass the coming night.

CHAPTER VII

THE WATER CAMP

"What's the mileage, Danny, since we broke away this morning?" the pilot asked while his companion was doing some figuring.

"Eight forty," came the prompt answer; "an' it strikes me we've come most halfway across this bally old island, the biggest they say in the whole world; an' I'm dead sure the least interestin' to boot."

"All right, keep your eyes skinned and tell me when you get a squint at a river down below. It would be one of the two they've marked as the Hay and the Field, lying near the border of Queensland and Central Australia."

"Reckon you mean to make this a short day's run, eh, what, neighbor?"

"We agreed to split the jump across in halves, you know, Danny; not any reason for rushing things; so we'll just loaf along and hold our breath for times when we may need it all to push through."

They had been dropping lower for some little time, and Danny was able to make good use of his dependable binoculars. From the various re-

peated grunts and grumblings that came from the sight-seeing navigator, it seemed as though he did not feel much impressed with the wild scenery they continued to pass over.

"Say, this is actually the most God-forsaken country around here I ever rested my lamps on, an' that's no dream either," Danny finally remarked, shaking his head forlornly as he lowered the glasses to rest his strained eyesight; "never a sign of a livin' human critter do I see, and small chance of wild animals in the bargain—not that the soil is so poor, 'cause there's a plenty of trees, an' all sorts of vegetation; only it seems so lackin' in bird and wild beast life. Mebbe you might scare up a few troops of them jumpin' kangaroos if you rooted through that jungle; an' like enough there's heaps of iguanas lurkin' in the dark spots; but they don't count with me. This isn't what I'd call a wild-game country, on'y a place for freaks to hang out."

Amos laughed to hear him rant like this.

"Sounds like you didn't cotton to the iguana any more than to the kangaroo, to listen to you complain, Danny."

"You said something, partner; no more I don't," admitted the other. "Hot dog! tell me 'bout the Gila monster over in our own southwest stretch of country, this here big Australian lizard sees him and goes a lot better. I shot one o' the critters, but that wound me up. They tell you a

heap o' things 'bout the iguana which may be true or a whoppin' yarn—say it c'n run like a horse; swim an' dive; shin up a tree; dig its own burrow; an' when up against hard luck fight like a reg'lar old he-wildcat. Over in the Philippines I'm told they bake such a ring-toed bird, an' call it de-li-cious to boot. Wow! no six-foot lizard for *my* dinner, believe me. But, Amos, there's your river—whether the Hay or Field I haven't the slightest idea."

"Nor does it matter to us in the least, Danny; all we ask of the stream is a quiet night's lodging; for we'll be on our way with the coming of dawn. I'll drop down a bit more, so you can pick out an open spot for the anchorage."

"O.K. buddy, leave it to your Dutch uncle. Here goes, then."

This was old stuff for the experienced navigator, for many a time during their flights over South American jungles and African wilds had he been thus commissioned by his running mate to select the scene of their next night's watery encampment, so that he felt quite competent to meet the emergency.

"Slow up, Amos," he presently sang out, cheerily enough; "looks right good to me ahead there; might swing her around once or twice, while I make dead certain."

"Just so," replied the pilot; "I can see where you mean, and must say it looks as if it would

answer our needs all right. Plenty of water up and down the stream, and no snags in sight, so far; we can get a good run for our money in the morning so as to lift out of the river channel without hitting any high trees at a bend. How now, Danny?"

"Go to it, partner; a quick and safe voyage for the first day; and now to get this ding-dong clatter out of our ears for a spell."

Deftly did the pilot head down for the surface of the river. There was a big splash as the pontoons took to the water, after which they skimmed along for a considerable distance, with gradually lessening speed. Then Amos taxied over to a certain spot, which apparently he had already selected as the best adapted for their anchorage.

"Heave ho! drop her down, Danny!" he suddenly called out, at which the little folding anchor sought a resting place at the bottom of the stream.

"Huh, not any too much water here, buddy," grunted the navigator; "but then it looks to me like the whole river must be shallow—mebbe this happens to be a dry season of the year; or else these Australian streams are a bit shy on depth. Guess this suits us O.K.—nearly in the middle, with each shore somethin' like a hundred feet away. Here's hopin' we'll have a quiet and restful night; with none o' them snoopin' bushboys

hangin' 'round to make a stage play for big game. Gee whiz! if they chanced to see this contraption drop down out o' the clouds and float here on their old river, reckon they'd think it some bird!" and he laughed boisterously at his own conceit, as well as the suggested astonishment of the poor, ignorant natives of the Australian wilderness.

"How about the distance from the banks, partner?" asked Amos, grinning as he detached his ear phone harness, and stood up to stretch his cramped legs.

"Seems all right to me," replied the other, looking at Amos questioningly.

"You don't think then, they could possibly jump that far?" continued the smiling pilot.

"Mebbe now you're referrin' to them cantankerous kangaroos, Amos. Seems like you must have your little joke, and rub it in on a feller. No, they told me 'bout thirty feet was their limit; so I'm not meanin' to lie awake to-night, expectin' a troop of the bally long-legged jumpers to come aboard an' run the ship."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, old scout; as a rule we're not fond of having visitors, be they two-legged newspaper reporters, or kangaroos. Even alligators or crocodiles have been unwelcome in times gone by, you remember, buddy. Now let's relax, and take things easy for the balance of this hot afternoon."

"Just as like as not we'll be pestered a heap by skeeters," suggested the other, always keen to scent out sources of possible trouble; "but I've got that powdered root handy; an' you know it gave us heaps o' peace up there at Point Barrow, Alaska, when we were gettin' ready to hop off for the old Pole. We c'n let some of the same smoulder in a pan; also rub a bit on our faces an' hands, if things get too thick."

"Forget all that, Danny, and let's try picking up a bit of a snooze; that warm air makes me a whole lot drowsy, for a fact."

Accordingly they got things in order, so as to have more room, and then proceeded to take it easy; while the hot sun rode down the western heavens toward the horizon that was hidden from their sight by the fringe of dense forest.

Later on, when Amos, refreshed by a couple of hours' sleep, opened his eyes he discovered Danny prowling around in the small canvas collapsible canoe they invariably carried, since finding how valuable an adjunct such a means for reaching the shore might become. He seemed to be using his paddle to ascertain the depth of the running water; and every little while would gaze at each of the river banks, as though indulging in speculations of some sort.

"Getting your bearings, eh, Danny?" sang out Amos, after lazily watching him for quite some time, "so you'll know where you are during the

dark part of the night, in case those savage kangaroos do start to coming aboard? Well, don't forget you've got that repeating rifle handy; and as for me, I know where I can lay hold of that old Roman candle you've been harboring ever so long, under the belief it might come in handy. I wonder now, whether those long-tailed jumpers would get a bad shock if they saw a bit of our fireworks break out?"

"Well, that ain't a bad idea, I'm sayin', partner. Between the two of us we might give 'em the scare of their lives. But I was really tryin' to find out whether it'd pay to drop a line over and try to pick up a mess of fish. I've seen quite a few swimmin' 'round here, an' every little while there's a rush over near the shore, like some piratical cuss might be dashin' in among a school so's to get his dinner. B'lieve I'll make a bluff at the game anyway. Like to say I'd angled just once in an Australian river, an' set my teeth in a native fish."

Following out his proposition Danny baited his hook with some sort of grub which he dug out of a decayed stump on the near shore and proceeded to tempt the scaly denizens of the stream to take hold. Being a pretty deft disciple of Izaak Walton he managed to secure a couple of promising subjects, with which to work out his proposition; so he took a few things with him, including the frying pan and coffeepot, and go-

ing ashore started a fire. When later on he hailed his chum, and told him supper was ready, also admonishing him to fetch along certain articles that would be needed in the layout, Amos drew the canoe or dinky back to the anchored amphibian by means of the cord provided for that very purpose, and soon joined his companion on the narrow sandy strip at the foot of the right-hand bank.

Neither of them had any idea as to the character or name of Danny's catch, but both seemed to enjoy their supper, the successful sportsman in particular declaring he had seldom eaten a more tasty morsel taken from any body of water that he had wet a line in.

They did not linger there after finishing the simple but filling meal; for already the shadows of coming night had begun to steal out from those dense forests around them, and even Amos had no desire to take unnecessary chances.

They were quite accustomed to sleeping in the confined space of the small double cockpit; although after each experience in such cramped quarters they had to do considerable stretching to get the stiffness out of their limbs.

There being a half moon, darkness would not enfold them until after midnight. Such surroundings very naturally brought back many vivid recollections of numerous former occasions, when they had passed nights afloat, with certain

perils hovering over their heads; so that even after Danny curled up with the full intention of seeking slumber, he lay awake for at least an hour, his mind filled with revived memories, and weird conjectures such as are apt to haunt the active brain of just such a visionary chap as he had always been.

When he did wake up it was to discover that in all probability the young moon had set for complete darkness surrounded them. It was Amos who had reached over to give him a little nudge; and Danny, understanding the possible meaning of such actions, gave no outward indication of alarm—just lay there and listened, with his heart commencing to beat against his ribs like a regular trip hammer!

CHAPTER VIII

WITH SPEAR AND BOOMERANG

Undoubtedly Danny Cooper experienced such a thrill on being so suddenly awakened on this particular night as he would remember for all time.

He could see the silvery stars in the dark dome overhead, and given half a chance at taking a reckoning might have figured just about what hour it must be. There was no opportunity for such head-work, however; he could catch a queer sort of sound that must be caused by running water meeting some sort of obstruction.

It came, too, from the direction of the nearer shore, as though some moving creature, man or animal, might be wading out toward the anchored plane. The sheer thought flashing through his brain electrified Danny, and all his former suspicions along the line of an attack by a troop of pugnacious kangaroos came back with additional force. Amos had jeered at the idea as absurd, but perhaps he was not laughing so much, now that some sort of portentous evil seemed gathering to burst upon their devoted heads.

"Hey! Amos, what's to pay?"

He tried just to whisper these words, but his

voice was rather husky, and it seemed to Danny as though it must surely carry to the farther shore.

"Something coming down on us. Johnny, get your gun!" came floating back, showing that Amos at least had not lost all power over his vocal cords.

"Sure thing—I got it right here—what you goin' to do, partner?"

"Be ready—I'm meaning to flash my torch that way. It may be the bushmen, and if you shoot aim above the trees remember, Danny!"

"Huh! no need to tell me that," the other replied; "I never shot anybody yet in all my life, an' don't hanker after doin' it. Go to it, old scout!"

The splashing had grown even louder—undoubtedly something was pushing forth and coming from that mysterious shore, now utterly blotted out in the prevailing darkness—something that remained unknown, whether human, or connected with the wild animal life of the country!

And as Danny continued to handle his repeating rifle with nervous fingers his strained eyes trying to pierce the gloom that lay so densely between the anchored flying boat and the river bank, suddenly a brilliant ray pierced that Stygian darkness. Danny was staggered at the brightness that followed, although he must have known that his chum had renewed the battery of

his powerful little searchlight a day or two previous to their leaving Sydney.

What was disclosed by this startling illumination gave him a shock. It was almost as though someone had struck him with a stuffed club. The water was fairly alive with moving figures—the most fantastic creations of the human family Danny had ever laid eyes on—dusky sons of the Australian bush country, with great woolly heads and decked in all the glory of their original native costume. There they were submerged to their naked waists in the water, and all heading cautiously toward the bobbing amphibian.

Danny saw upraised arms brandishing spears and other weapons of which at the time in all his great excitement he could make little or nothing. He knew it was up to him to start something. Why remain there as though frozen in his seat when he was holding in his hands a means for creating a panic?

"Whang! bang! bang!"

He sent forth those three shots as fast as he could work the mechanism of his up-to-date rifle, not neglecting to follow the advice given by Amos. At the same time his overwrought feelings just had to break loose, which they did in the shape of one of his choice cowboy "whoopee" shouts, enough in itself to create consternation in any uncivilized breast.

Amos had dropped his flashlight in the cubby-

hole where he crouched; and even as Danny's fierce shout rang out there was a sputter of sparks, then a fountain of the same pouring forth, to prove that Amos had indeed touched off that big Roman candle, the presence of which aboard the crowded cockpit of the plane had been the subject of more than one acrimonious controversy between himself and the original purchaser, Danny Cooper.

When immediately afterwards a ball of glowing red fire went sailing grandly into the air, and over the tree tops Danny felt like giving a second cowboy challenge; for by the glow of that sailing fire ball he could see that the astounded bushboys no longer kept pushing out into the stream; but on the contrary had turned their backs on the amazing eagle of the skies that they had seen descend and seek lodgment on their particular river.

All curiosity to investigate its nature, and possibly finish its flying career—instigated doubtless by their medicine men, who sought to conciliate the evil devils of the air by that means—had been scattered to the four winds, and just now flight and safety first were the only things those superstitious aborigines had in their minds.

So Amos continued to wave his long cylinder, and send out frequent bursts of highly colored fire, accompanied by fountains of yellow sparks, until the last messenger was dislodged, when

again darkness descended on the striking scene.

The splashing of agitated water had ceased, but Danny caught certain significant sounds from the dense wooded tract beyond the shore line, which he could easily imagine must be caused by the hasty rush of terrified warriors.

Once he actually believed one of those hideous phantoms must have scorned to flee, for certainly some object struck the side of the fuselage with quite a smart blow.

"Flash your light again, Amos!" gasped Danny; "let's see if any of that scarecrow crew broke through."

When his comrade had accommodated him several times, and Danny could discover no sign of a desperate bushboy, with threatening spear or menacing boomerang alongside, he breathed easier.

"Wonder if they'll come back for another dose, eh, what, buddy?" the navigator was saying, as all sounds died out in the distance.

Amos gave a little chuckle, as of amusement.

"No fear of that happening, partner—not after such a combination of noises and fireworks as we treated them to. They know now this queer bird can spit out fire balls, rain sparks and see with an eye that runs along the water, just as the lightning comes down from the clouds."

"Hot dog, but that *was* a fierce experience, I'll tell the world," Danny went on to say, with a

sigh of relief that seemed to well up from his very shoes. "Like as not I'm so worked up by now that I'll not grab another second of sleep, which would be too, too bad."

"Oh, that shouldn't worry you so much, old sea scout," Amos assured him. "The night's fairly well gone. Take a look up yonder, and you'll see what I'm telling you is a fact."

"Then I did have a good hunk of sleep after all, and mornin' is near ready to drop in on us. Oh! well, what difference does it make, since we chased that rough-house gang off, and never wet a single hair doin' it? But excuse me from goin' ashore to start breakfast, Amos; how'd a feller know but what one o' them black guys might be layin' in ambush, ready to spit me with his nasty old spear? I'm meanin' to sit right here, and keep my gun ready for biz, till day comes asneakin' along."

Amos was of a similar mind, which made it unanimous; so there the pair crouched in their cubby-holes, anything but comfortable in body, but feeling that while they thus remained on guard no evil could overwhelm them.

The stars soon showed signs of fading out, and over toward the east the fair dawn crept ever closer; until finally the dainty, snow-white fleecy clouds commenced to assume pink and violet rays, sure token of the near approach of the day king.

"Glad I've lived to see the beginning of another day," Danny was saying, as he commenced to poke around for the "eat-box" and the gallon thermos jug. "I reckon now that was as close a squeak as we've run up against for a month of Sundays. But see here, Amos, you haven't explained how you happened to know somethin' was workin' out from the shore, and threatenin' to board our craft, while we snoozed here like the babes in the wood?"

"Nothing strange about that, Danny," the other adventurer assured him. "You happen to know what a light sleeper I am as a rule—why, a cat walking across the room used to wake me up, they always told me at home. Well, I was dreaming that my canoe had upset in the rapids, and I could hear the splash of the boiling water as plain as anything. Then it struck me there was really some sort of splashing going on close to the shore. That was when I roused you up—my dream had proved to be founded on reality. Just the same, boy, we had a close call."

"Sort o' habit with us, seems like, buddy," said Danny.

They continued to lie there, always on the alert, listening for a renewal of the suspicious sounds; but nothing came to stir them into fresh action. By degrees dawn dispelled the darkness, and when Danny could make sure that not a single black boy lay hidden in that thick brush covering

the river bank he became once more the care-free lad of yore. Old Man Trouble did not hang on long with Danny, as a rule.

"Whatever was it I saw you taking aboard a bit ago, partner?" he asked his running mate. "Did that crowd leave anything behind for a memento of their hurried call, I want to know?"

Amos smilingly held something up, at which Danny stared, as though his eyes would pop out of his head.

"Looks like a reg'lar old spear, with a bone-point that's mighty sharp in the bargain. Oh! boy, but wouldn't I love to have that sticker hangin' in my den as a trophy of our first meetin' with these Australian bushboys?"

"No reason in the world why you shouldn't, Danny. And by the same token that spear, dangling in our wing yonder—which you notice is a bit torn—wasn't the only thing they threw at the big bird that'd dropped down on their little creek. It happens that we've both laid eyes on one of these contraptions before. I found it in my cockpit, here, where it had fallen."

"Hot dog, if it ain't a real old-timer *boomerang,* that looks like it'd seen a heap of service. Never did understand just how those pikers could throw such a crooked club so as to make it come back, and knock over a Johnny close to their elbow. But it's as hard as flint; lucky dogs we were, brother, to miss bein' hit."

CHAPTER IX

AN AËRIAL RACE

"EVERYTHING fixed, Mr. Navigator?" asked the pilot, shortly afterwards.

They had eaten breakfast, such as it chanced to be, and as the sun peeped above the low bunch of squatty trees on the eastern bank the time seemed propitious for making their ascent.

"All to the good here, partner," sang out Danny; "let her rip."

The throb of the eager motor followed close on the heels of his words, and the propeller also took up its part of the duet, humming most cheerily as the amphibian began to move more and more rapidly through the water.

There was an abundance of room for getting up speed, and when Amos turned the nose of his boat toward the sky the ascent began under most favorable auspices. So they left behind another scene whose memory would often return to haunt them. Danny felt certain he must many times imagine he again heard that sudden outburst of rifle shots, and the weird cries of the startled bushboys as they scrambled so madly for the shelter of the wooded bank, with the vaulting

balls of colored fire adding wings to their wild flight.

Picking up his course with utmost ease the experienced pilot headed in a direct northwesterly direction. Danny settled down to do some figuring, being anxious to settle a certain question that was uppermost in his mind.

He soon reached a conclusion, and from what could be seen of his partly muffled face, it appeared as though the solution might be quite satisfactory.

"Sailin' along as straight as any bee ever started back to its hive after loadin' up with honey, an' that's a fact, old sport," he went on to report, with more or less enthusiasm.

"Oh! I reckoned we hadn't deviated much from the course," was the calm way Amos took the news; "but later on you'll have a better chance to prove it. A bit early in the day for that sort of business, I'd say, Danny."

"Things look all to the good to me so far this fine mornin', with no signs of bad weather in sight. Mebbe we'd find it cooler up toward the ceilin'. I'm beginnin' to shed some of this junk that I took on 'cause the early mornin' was so chilly."

Apparently Amos was of the same mind, for he made no objection to lofting, and before long Danny found a chance to make use of his indispensable binoculars. When he could thus amuse

himself he appeared to be in the seventh heaven of delight. As usual he soon began to inform the otherwise employed pilot of his discoveries, and comment on the panorama as disclosed by their passing over new territory far below.

Now it was a vast stretch of apparently level surface that Danny described, which in his mind compared favorably with the wide plains of their own southwestern country; then again he could pick out numerous defiles and deep gullies, that looked as though they were well fitted as shelter for wild animals.

When he found the conditions had changed, and that he was gazing upon what seemed to be ridges of high, wooded ground, Danny scoffed at making any comparison between this Australian picture and some of those he carried in his mind.

"Huh! strikes me this is some tame country, buddy. Can't hold a candle to our bully old Rockies; an' as for bein' in the same class with that Andes region down in Ecuador—say, they couldn't be reckoned as at all similar."

"Strikes me you're fond of speaking of those Andes as the biggest thing ever, Danny," ventured the grinning pilot; "but just wait till we hit up against the *real* Himalaya stuff and you'll change your whistle some."

"Mebbe I will," agreed the other, meditatively "but I've got a great respect for the Andes, an' you'll have to show me before I take

water. I'm also a heap curious 'bout that Tibet —the place they like to call the top o' the world. Gee! I bet it's a funny sort of country; an' if only we could drop down so's to set our feet on it, it'd be worth boastin' 'bout."

Amos on his part seldom allowed himself to give much thought to what might possibly happen in the indefinite future; as a rule his whole attention was engrossed in solving problems of the immediate present, and the task of running his ship correctly.

Time passed, and without any interruption to the steady progress of the flight. It was marvelous how their winged chariot of the air lanes could continue this swing through space hour after hour, and show no sign of a clogging motor; but long familiarity with such conditions had made both aviators firm believers in the unlimited capacity of their craft for service, so they would experience surprise only in case the even tenor of their passage was interrupted.

It drew along toward noon, and Danny was fondling his small plane sextant, that had served so faithfully on numberless occasions when they were far out over the salty seas, with no other way of calculating their position—though of course he would not be silly enough to bother with the instrument on the present occasion, when they could pick up any number of "signposts" by the aid of those dependable binoculars,

with the land spread beneath like a vast map.

It might have been noticed about this time that Danny bent most of his attention off toward the north; and the reason for this close scrutiny was made manifest when finally he announced a discovery of considerable importance.

"There she is, just as I reckoned would happen, Amos. I c'n get a fair peek at what looks like a big body of water, without a sign of any land beyond. Must be the Gulf o' Carpencaria I marked down on our chart—just to think of our strikin' it! But it shows we're right on our course, which is the main thing with us, eh?"

"Now suppose you turn your attention to the other side, and see if you can make out a smaller body of water—fresh at that—which ought to lie off to the southwest a bit."

"Hot dog! partner, you said it; 'cause I do see just such a little patch. Now I remember there *was* a lake marked down on the chart—Woods Lake it was called, seems to me. That proves my figgerin' to be co-rect."

Danny looked as happy as a boy at Christmas time, or better still, upon breaking loose after the last day at school, with a glorious summer vacation looming up ahead, and no lessons to puzzle over for two whole months.

"All we want now," he observed, contentedly, "is 'bout two more hours o' this same weather, an' we'll fetch that cozy bay you've picked out

for the second night's stay. Say, takin' it all in all, this is the softest snap of crossin' a whole continent we ever struck. I'd sure hate to keep goin' like this for a week—set me looney, nothin' doin' to break all the monotony."

"Go slow with your kicking, old mate," warned long-headed Amos; "two hours more did I hear you say? Well, there's still time for all sorts of squalls to bump into us. Just notice that low bank of clouds over yonder toward the lake. Strikes me they might have something in them to give you all the excitement you can handle."

"Huh! take it back, Amos, every word of it; might a known all this hot weather'd breed some kind o' upset stuff. Mebbe now if we hit up the pace a bit we might keep ahead of the storm?"

"Righto, Danny, and here goes to show our heels," with which remark Amos advanced the throttle to its limit, giving the willing motor a full head; so that soon they must have been winging their way along at the rate of more than a hundred and forty miles an hour.

Danny did not confine all his observation to the ground from that time forward; but bent frequent more or less anxious glances in the quarter where the suspicious cloud bank lay. It did not take him long to learn the significant fact that it was moving up the heavens with constantly accelerated speed, so that it actually became a race, to see whether they would arrive at their ex-

pected haven of refuge before being overtaken by the impending outbreak of the elements.

When an hour later Danny announced that he could make out the sea off to the northwest things began to look more hopeful, but at the same time the threat of the storm clouds had become much more pronounced.

"Think we c'n make it, partner?" questioned Danny, looking as though he no longer esteemed their passage "dull, and commonplace."

"It's something of a toss-up, strikes me," replied the pilot, perfectly composed and collected; "but I'd like to speed the boat a bit more if I could, though she's doing her prettiest just the same. Going to be a tight pull, with the chances evenly divided. If I lose hope of making port before the wind strikes us, I'll head up, and try to get above the low storm clouds."

So the race was on, and nothing else could be done save await the outcome. Danny paid but scant heed to the earth view now spread before his eyes, being wholly taken up with watching the swirling masses of black clouds that were pursuing them so furiously.

He could see the whole outline of the coast plainly, and noted in particular the sheltered bay wherein they hoped to spend the coming night. It looked doubly attractive just then, in Danny's eyes, when faced by the possibility of being compelled to climb above the storm, and ride it out

in making wide circuits, so as not to drift too far over the treacherous Timor Sea.

It was now just two-forty, as the nervous Danny learned on glancing at his little wrist watch. Less than another fifteen minutes would settle the question for them one way or the other. He must have chuckled to himself as he contemplated his present condition of nerves, and remembered how he had been complaining of the dreadful monotony but a brief time before.

Amos was not saying a word, only devoting himself heart and soul to his difficult task of managing the swift-flying ship, and figuring to bring his precious charge safely down upon the agitated surface of the bay, before the rapidly rising wind made the aërial craft its plaything.

"Here goes then for the try!"

With these ominous words Amos turned the nose of the boat downward. The partly enclosed bay lay there invitingly, if only they were granted the few minutes necessary to a successful settling on the water without being overturned and wrecked by a sudden side gust of wind.

Danny held his breath, and awaited the outcome with more or less anxiety.

CHAPTER X

THE DAMAGED WING

By this time it was too late for Amos to change his mind, and attempt to lift his craft above the clutches of the storm; come what might he must alight upon the bay, and seek shelter from the violent wind behind that friendly point of land he had marked down in his mind.

Now he was nearing the surface of the water he could see that already it was being churned into foam by the forerunners of the sudden gale; but being an experienced and superior pilot, accustomed to making landings under all manner of disadvantages, Amos understood just how to circumvent that treacherous wind.

He swung around so as to bring the storm in his teeth, swooped lower and lower; and then the pontoons kissed the leaping waves, kept dashing through with constantly diminishing speed, scattering the spray in profusion, until the desired end had been attained.

It was with a sense of triumph that Amos started to taxi along toward that close-by finger of land, back of which he knew they would be able to lie in comparative safety. Danny

breathed easier, now that the worst was over. To himself he was raising the usual "hallelujah" song, with Amos as its central figure for congratulation; for Danny's appreciation of his pal's ingenuity and skill was unbounded.

"Drop your gripper, buddy!" sang out the pilot, when he felt certain they had passed sufficiently far back of the buffer point.

As the faithful little folding anchor took hold they swung there in security, well sheltered from the storm's worst fury. But by that time both of them were soaking wet, what with the spray bath, and the fact that rain was now coming down with a vengeance.

Accordingly both exerted themselves to procure some sort of protection, so as to keep the flood out of the cockpits and also shield them against further soaking. Danny had prepared for this while his comrade was piloting the ship toward the port he had chosen. They had waterproof canvas spreads handy, such as had often kept them dry in the midst of a downpour; and as there was urgent need for haste they put these in place in almost a twinkling.

The motor having stopped its labors, and the propeller ceasing to rotate, it was now possible for them to hear each other speak if a special effort were made; accordingly both disconnected their earphone harness, and Danny let himself loose.

"Some rain, I'd say, partner—had begun to b'lieve this was a reg'lar dry country like down in Peru; but I know better now. Wow! but I'm wet through, an' shiverin' to beat the band. How about you, Amos?"

"Blanket—wrap it around you—soon feel warmer—but no more water running into the cabin, glad to say," was the terse yet suggestive advice given by the other.

So the bedraggled pair continued to sit the storm out. It was not the most delightful experience that could be imagined; but then being old campaigners they had long since learned to endure things stoically, especially when they could not be cured.

The storm proved to be of short duration, for inside of less than an hour Danny called out that the clouds had broken away to the southwest; and sure enough a glowing ray of cherry sunlight presently gave promise of better things to come.

"Might have been a whole lot worse," said the optimistic Amos, who never failed to see the silver lining of even the darkest cloud; "we'll have a whole hour to get dried out; and by then the waves will have gone down considerably, so we can better our anchorage a bit."

"Yes, and while we're about it, partner, why not pick out a place near the shore, so I c'n get a hot supper, with a *real* camp fire? I'm as hun-

gry as a wolf, an' it don't look like there'd be any wild kangaroos a-layin' for us so close to a town."

"Not a bad idea, I'd say," Amos hastened to assure him, proving that he too must be feeling hungry, and ready to partake of a good warm meal, with some chance to stretch his cramped legs.

This arrangement was soon under way, and no particular trouble beset them while accomplishing it. Danny ferried ashore in the clumsy canvas dinky, and soon called out that he had found plenty of dry wood for the fire. He appeared to be unusually cheerful; but then that was always the case when Danny busied himself in preparing something to eat.

Amos came ashore later on, and lent a hand, showing just how anxious he must be to quell that riotous mutiny down below, as clamorous Nature demanded the necessary stimulant in the shape of food and hot drink—for both were shivering, the setting sun radiating but little warmth.

"We never had such great luck, in my opinion, Danny," observed Amos, later on, while watching the coffee pot sending out its fragrant steam.

"As what, 'specially, buddy?" asked the other, not wholly understanding what was meant by this remark.

"That wing the spear jabbed a hole in—it has widened, and my heart was in my throat for fear

one of those gusts of wind might split the whole wing, and give us a barrel roll that must end in a water crash."

"Zowie! was it as bad as that, old pal? And even then your nerve didn't go back on you, 'cause that was by long odds the neatest landin' I ever saw you make. You bet I'm thankful—an upset must've queered all our fine plans, even if we did escape with our lives. Hot dog! but it beats all, that Amos Green luck you was born with!"

"So we'll hang over here to-morrow, while I patch up that wing," the pilot went on to add, paying no attention to Danny's praise, which had become "old stuff" from constant repetition. "You can amuse yourself by going shopping; for that town we saw can't be a great way off; and a fresh batch of bread, as well as a bit of ham, bacon, and even *eggs,* if so be you could run across any except ostrich eggs, wouldn't be a bad thing."

"Leave all that to your Dutch uncle, partner. If there are fresh eggs in town I'll grab them, and we'll have a feast in the bargain."

They enjoyed their supper immensely, even close-mouthed Amos venturing to admit that it "went to the right spot"; while the cook brazenly praised his own culinary efforts—but then that is always the way when hungry campers gather around, to partake of the bountiful spread, tempt-

ing odors of which have been setting them fairly wild for so long a time.

In fact they enjoyed their freedom so much that neither manifested any particular desire to hasten a return to the amphibian, lying off shore and looking like some strange monstrous bird in the light of the overhead moon, now beyond its halfway phase.

Nor did they have any visitors. Possibly their location was at some little distance from any road; or else the storm had been so violent that few persons were abroad. They caught certain sounds from time to time that had a familiar strain, such as the barking of dogs or it might be the he-haw bray of a donkey; Danny in particular appeared to welcome these noises as harbingers of civilization.

"When your ears are tickled with such farmyard sounds, partner, somehow things don't seem so lonely like; I could almost imagine myself over at my old stampin' ground in Texas, with the ranch house just over the rise, an' the cowpunchers gathered 'round the festive board, a-gorin' themselves on Ma Slivers' fine cookin'."

Danny actually sighed, as though those resurrected recollections awakened thoughts that bordered on envy; although at the time he may have considered himself a most abused individual. Distance is apt to lend enchantment to the view, as an old saying declares.

When they found themselves growing drowsy Amos settled the matter by saying he meant to go aboard; and of course Danny agreed it was the part of wisdom to secure some sleep while the chance held good. The passage over to the plane was accomplished without any great trouble; and soon afterwards both of them had snuggled down in their blankets to await the coming of another day.

In the morning this landing maneuver was repeated, breakfast being enjoyed on firm ground. Danny did not go back to the ship, being eager to take up the walk along the shore, and see whether there might not be a road he could make use of.

"I don't figger it c'n be more'n a mile or so to town," he had told his comrade, when discussing his intended journey; "an' mebbe the walk in would be medium fair if I keep close to the edge o' the water, where that sand runs. So long, partner. Wish you luck with mendin' that wing; an' say, I'm right glad that bonehead spear didn't jab either of us 'tween the ribs."

Amos managed to make good use of the little dinky while patching the injured wing, for he could stand in the boat, and do his work much better than if compelled to lie out on the wing, while engaged on the repair job.

He was pretty much of an all-round mechanic, and knew his boat from end to end, as only a

pilot could who was accustomed to assembling the various parts that went to make up a finished aircraft. When Danny finally showed up, well laden with his purchases, Amos had made excellent headway, so that the end of his task was in sight.

"Stronger than ever, I'd call it, Amos," his mate hastened to assure him, after he had taken a swift look over the capable work of his companion.

"I see you managed to strike town, and get away with it, judging from the bundles you've fetched back, Old Scout Danny," remarked the pilot, with a laugh.

"Oh! I'm a boss grub skirmisher, anyway you choose to fix it, buddy," Danny assured him, adding solicitously: "you want to handle that square package mighty careful, like—eggs, boy! fine, fresh hens' eggs, laid inside o' twelve hours —worth their weight in silver to us in the bargain, an' cheap at that. Got 'em from a queer old lady livin' in a tumble-down shanty—seen better days, I reckon—come from Chester over in Merrie England, which she told me wasn't far from Liverpool, where some o' my folks came from, the rest bein' from Ireland. If we're meanin' to stick it out here till another mornin' I plan to go back to town again, send off some mail, and fetch home a few more things I've

thought of—that is, if you haven't any objections, partner."

"Please yourself about that, Danny; all I know is I'm going to take things easy, and get ready for the next jump over salt water to the Dutch island of Java, with Batavia, its capital, our charted landing place."

CHAPTER XI

TAKING ON FRESH SUPPLIES

"One thing you did hit square in the bull's-eye, Amos," observed Danny, as he amused himself rubbing up the black dashboard, with its various indicators and gadgets; "which was the name of the town over yonder, where I did my little shoppin', and mailed our letters."

"You mean it is Port Darwin, then, buddy?"

"Just that; and the two islands standin' as a buffer 'tween our camp here, and the open Timor Sea, are named Melville and Bathurst. Some place, that Darwin—got a telegraph line that stretches all the way down to Adelaide, after passin' through North, Central and South Australia. Thought you'd be glad to know about that, in case you felt like sendin' a telegram to the Big Boss, eh, what?"

Danny kept watching his chum's face as he mentioned this fact, and was a bit surprised to see him shake his head in the negative; while a curious smile flitted across his features, of which Danny could make nothing whatever.

"Which it strikes me as some queer of my pal," the navigator told himself, as though more

or less peeved; "never yet knew the time he wasn't mighty eager to let our backer know 'bout how we were gettin' along, so's to relieve his mind; for we've heard how he worries 'bout his boys. Can't be Amos is gettin' tired of keepin' up that game. Well, I'm dead certain he knows his business, and anyway it ain't my job to butt in."

Just as he had promised Danny did set out for a second visit to the neighboring town around the middle of the afternoon. It promised to kill a little of his surplus time; and besides, he really wished to add a few more purchases to their dwindling stock of supplies in the way of "eats."

Then again each of them had written several brief letters, which had better be on the way to their various destinations.

He was back before dusk and feeling more or less fatigued, not being used to doing so much walking. Amos seemed to be quite satisfied with conditions, and ready to take up the game again when morning arrived.

"Learn anything new while over in Port Darwin, old scout?" he inquired, with one of his incomparable smiles.

"Kept me busy fendin' off a heap o' questions 'bout who we are, an' where we came from last; as well as which way we meant to go after leavin' this peak of Australia. I want to tell yuh Yankees ain't the only curious folks by a big sight."

"Oh! that's to be expected in these days, when strangers blow in to foreign parts aboard some sort of flying machine, and coming from ports thousands of miles distant. It's a queer age we live in, partner, paste that in your helmet and remember it. Got the mail off, I reckon, matey?"

"Sure did," snapped Danny; "an' I was some s'prised to see you hadn't sent a letter to the Boss, like you always have in times gone by."

"Nothing of great importance to send on. Can bunch it all later, when we've had our big run over the Seven Seas, and drop down before Singapore."

Danny gave a grunt, as though he felt his pal might be "stalling," with the intention of keeping him in the dark; but then there were plenty of other matters to engage their attention, and so he brushed the little figment of a gathering mystery aside.

"Goin' to have some feast to-night, laddie," he sang out gayly, as he held up a package; "couldn't guess what that is, I'll bet a cookie. Roasted chicken, babe, and cooked by that same old lady I got the bread from. Left my order this mornin', feelin' we could blow in for once, and have some eats worth mentionin'. Since the weather is so warm we c'n have it cold with our coffee an' other stuff. Some rustler when it comes to grabbin' rations worth while, you'll have to admit, boy."

"One thing sure, Danny, we're never going to starve to death while you can lift a finger to prevent it. I don't suppose you happened to run across a single person you knew in Darwin town?"

"Shucks, no! Got two invitations to supper tonight—hated like fun to decline them; but somehow I suspected a *trap* when I learned that one o' the chaps sent off long letters each week to some paper over in Old England. I fight shy o' all newspaper men since we ran up 'gainst that tricky Freddy Stackpole. 'Tain't nice to have to maroon write-up reporters on uninhabited islands, to keep 'em from givin' our stunts away."

Since their opportunities for eating ashore did not come along with any degree of regularity when in the midst of a flight, they decided to take advantage of the present occasion, and indulge to the limit, especially since Danny felt amply assured there was not the slightest danger of any ferocious wild beast interrupting the festivities.

"If your figures are correct, partner," Amos chanced to remark during the progress of the meal, "we've more than enough gas to see us to Batavia, where we can take on a supply. I'm depending on you to keep tabs along that line, and feel absolutely certain you'll not be overestimating the contents of our tanks."

"Thanks, old man, I know my biz, and you c'n

depend on it I've figgered under the mark, if anything. If luck rides with us the jump to Batavia hadn't ought to take us more'n a single day. Even if we're held up we could keep movin' for a second day, and then some; so I'm not worryin' any 'bout the juice givin' out. But somehow every now'n then I can't help wonderin' what under the sun that second surprise c'n be he told about in his letter, an' then just left us up in the air a-guessin'. See here, partner, how 'bout you—d'ye know *anything* he could have meant?"

"I've had no better information than you saw for yourself in the letter, Danny; you keep on amusing yourself by doing some tall guessing, and perhaps you'll get on a warm trail sooner or later."

Danny looked at his chum reflectively, as though he fancied there might be something back of these words.

"Oh! I've badgered my brain tryin' to grip somethin' worth while, an' sometimes I reckon I'm hot, and then again stone cold. But Amos, d'ye know what struck me as the best guess yet?"

"All in the dark, partner; suppose you enlighten me."

"Huh! if it turned out to be that ice-detector contraption I was readin' about a while back, wouldn't it be just worth its weight in gold to

us when we come to cross over the top of the Himalayas, where it's always bitter cold, and sometimes as foggy as anything we struck off the Banks of Newfoundland."

"Now, that's a clever idea of yours, old scout; let's hope it may turn out to be a fact. As I remember it, all the equipment necessary for installing this ice-warning indicator is a metal wand, to be attached to the edge of one of the wings, and connected by a cable to a dial fastened to the instrument board. The minute any ice begins to form on that little rod a needle on the dial points to a danger mark."

"You said it, Amos. I've studied that scheme so much I c'n speak it every word by heart. It's really a thermometer that registers along the danger zone, which lies between thirty and thirty-five degrees. Below an' above that range of temperature it's too cold, or too mild for ice to form on the plane. Always did strike me such a little cherub would be a perfect godsend to the hard-workin' air-mail pilots out there in our Rocky Mountain postal lanes. I know that lots o' times I came mighty near bein' forced into a crash by carryin' ice on the wings, till they bent like a couple o' Injun war bows."

"Keep on guessing, matey," advised Amos, blandly; "can't do one mite of harm, and gives you plenty of opportunities to prevent your mind from getting sluggish. And don't forget to tell

me whenever you think you've struck a hot scent, because I'm deeply interested in the game."

"All right, buddy, just as you say; but I've got a notion you could gimme a neat little boost every now an' then—if only you cared to."

"Oh, one of us keeping up that racket ought to be enough, Danny boy; and in fact I've got quite enough to hold my mind busy in other directions. But just the same I'd be joyful if we did find some of those new contraptions incorporated in the two-motored cabin ship he's had sent out to Singapore for us to use in the cloud-chaser trip we're figuring on trying next."

No complaints had been recorded respecting the quality of the cold roast fowl; and since never a scrap of it was left, saving the bones, it might be taken for granted that the diners considered it *prime.*

Danny had sat there and looked long and earnestly toward the red skies in the west, as though speculating upon the possibilities of fresh and perhaps even thrilling adventures lying in wait for them far out over those mysterious bodies of salt water often spoken of by old sailors as the Seven Seas. That was indeed a region where tropical storms were frequent, and other dread perils lurked, eager to pounce upon unwary travelers, whether aboard modern steamers, frail native catamarans, or sky rangers in the shape of up-to-date planes.

They spent that night aboard, doubled up in the cramped quarters of their diminutive cubby-holes, with Danny looking forward hopefully to the happy occasion when they might have all the room they wished in the spacious cabin of their new and powerful cruiser of the cloudlands.

Came morning, and found the pair hastening their breakfast, before embarking upon the second leg of their voyage into the west.

"Couldn't look better off there, I'd say, Amos," was Danny's way of saying he fancied the prospects for a fair day were rather good.

"We can stand it all right," replied the other; "though for that matter this is going to be an experience different from anything we've ever bucked against. There will hardly be a time all day when we're not in plain sight of one or half a dozen tropical islands; so you'll have the chance of your life to see what's going on under the coconut and date trees. Then besides, if we're threatened by a coming storm we can find shelter to leeward of some such friendly island and ride the wind out. I'm eager to get started; so if you're all fixed, suppose you drag up that mud-hook and we'll say good-by to Australia."

"Hot dog! I'm as wild to get goin' as a hound held tight on the leash; so give her the gun, old pal, an' we'll start breezin' over salt water once more, this time on the air lane to sweet Singapore."

CHAPTER XII

OVER THE TIMOR SEA

There was not the slightest trouble in making a start, for a wide stretch of clear water lay before them. Amos soon had attained sufficient altitude to suit his purpose and cleared away on his course.

It was early in the morning, but with the rising of the sun they had a wonderful panorama spread out below them. The sea lay basking in the glorious sunlight, with flocks of white-winged gulls along the shore hunting for their breakfast on mud flats; and a few boats at anchor, doubtless belonging to the town at which Danny had conducted his bargaining for supplies.

So by degrees the mainland fell away as they winged their passage into the west, where destiny was calling them to other fields of adventure and glory.

Danny, of course, had commenced the customary scrutiny of his surroundings as soon as he could secure temporary relief from his accustomed duties; and the canvas he found spread all around him was of tremendous magnitude.

"So, this is the old Timor Sea, is it?" he re-

marked, just as it is said our Pershing (or some other famous American) observed, "So, this is Paris!" on beholding the French capital for the first time. "Looks a whole lot like all salt water duck ponds. And over there to the north lies another of the same kind—Arafura it was marked on our chart. How pat I'm gettin' these here East Indian oceans. A much-traveled gink, Danny, you're growin' to be these fine days."

Later on, when the last vestige of the mainland had faded completely from sight, something else seemed to have taken possession of Danny's interest. This proved to be an eagerness to "pump" his companion with reference to a knowledge of the conditions awaiting them beyond the horizon toward which the nose of their aërial flyer was pointed.

"How 'bout these same Dutch East India islands we're on the way to visit, Amos? D'ye reckon now they're in this flyin' game, like most o' the civilized world; and do they have airdromes, flyin' fields, and all that sort o' stuff, I want to know?"

This was a practical question which interested Amos, for he always exhibited a readiness to afford any information which he chanced to possess.

"To tell you the truth, Danny, I'm not so dead certain about that sort of thing," he went on to say. "It's a fact that the Dutch are interested

in aviation to a certain extent; and I've read of Dutch flyers out here among the islands of the South Seas. It was only lately I read about an airdrome that was half completed at Rangoon; and just as like as not there must be some such field at the big city of Batavia. Still, I'm not doing any worrying about such matters. That's the one great advantage with these amphibians; you can drop down on any old body of water, salt or fresh, and spend a night, even to making any needed repairs."

"That's a big fact, partner. Where would we be only for that smart contraption allowin' us to make use of either wheels for landing on solid ground or pontoons for water use? Never could have made those two bully flights over South America and Africa only for that same invention; an' I take off my hat to the gent who thought it up."

"Let me know when you get your first glimpse of land ahead, old sea scout," Amos went on to say; "it will be a bunch of islands, one of which carries the same name as this sea we're passing over right now—Timor, owned by the Dutch; while the British have a part of it, and the Portuguese still another section. I figure we ought to get there around noon, if all goes well on this hot December day, so near Christmas."

"Hope we pass right over that bit of tropical stuff. I'd like to fix my lamps on the town I

noticed on the map, Kutie, wasn't it, eh, Amos?"

"You got close to it, I'd say, Danny boy: Kupang is the Dutch name; and I've read that it's some place, considering how close it lies to the Equator, and is boiling hot all the year through."

"No wonder then they grow all sorts of spices on these islands! I'd say they *were* hot stuff, all right—mustard, pepper and such. How 'bout makin' our port by evenin', Amos, dear?"

"No question but what we will," came the immediate reply; "but just the same it isn't going to be Batavia."

"You don't tell me, partner. That means we'll pass a night back of some island, where mebbe not a single white man could be found. Well, that suits me O.K. I'm remarkin'. Always do want to see all that's goin' on when I'm on the wing. Air scouts like us hanker after a checkered career, as they say in the adventure books, an' we sure do get our fill of sight-seein' as we swing around the circle, this way, that way, over the whole world. Course there isn't any need o' our hurrying through with this jaunt. Take your time, Miss Sally. Rome wasn't built in a day, I've been told; an' we have to hustle so much in tryin' to beat the records, that we c'n afford to loaf once in a coon's age."

So Danny dismissed the subject, showing how much confidence he had in anything his comrade felt inclined to try out. True, he did not just un-

derstand why Amos should so suddenly change his mind; but that was all right, and no doubt the other had some good and sufficient reason for so doing.

The morning was spent in making steady progress toward their ultimate goal; but it began to be a bit monotonous along toward eleven, with only what seemed to be a limitless expanse of salt water lying in every direction, and never a solitary sailing craft or coasting steamer in sight, no matter how Danny strained his eyes in the endeaver to locate "something different."

About that time he gave utterance to an exclamation that told of relief.

"Glimpsed something, have you, matey?" asked the pilot, who had clung to the controls all through the long morning, as though he really enjoyed the handling of so capable and trustworthy a craft.

"Thought it must be a low-lyin' fleecy cloud, but now I c'n see what looks like trees—yes, an' they are feathery trees in the bargain—coconut, like as not, 'cause they grow on all these hot country islands I understand. Now I'm hopin' things'll get a heap more interestin' to a feller whose job is to keep on the lookout. Say, I c'n even glimpse some little dots on the water that might be native fishin' craft—Malay outriggers, mebbe, like we saw in that picture I picked up at Sydney."

The farther they went the more pronounced became the delight of the one whose deft hands manipulated the wonderful binoculars; from time to time he would call out, announcing some fresh discovery.

"Bend over a little to labboard, matey!" he cried at one time; "an' sure's you live we'll bob right over that same Kubang town. Ought to be worth goin' out o' our way a bit to take a look-in. Hully gee! but this is the game—all the sights of a World's Fair, an' with no humbug Arabs or sham South Sea Islanders thrown in for good measure. Say, mebbe now you're figgerin' on holdin' over at this same dump called Kubeb for short. How come, partner?"

"A wild and woolly guess, Danny boy—the last thing I'd feel like doing; we'd get no sleep at all, for there'd be no end of danger. Such places hold pretty much the scum of the pearl fisheries—hard customers who'd think but little of murdering us in our sleep and cleaning out our possessions. Believe me, I'd a whole lot prefer picking up some tiny coral-rimmed islet and lying in its shelter for the night. But that needn't hinder our swinging around this island town a few times, so we can see what it's like."

"Good idea, say I, Amos; lots o' queer sights out here in this corner o' the world, if only you know where to search for 'em."

Accordingly they did make a sweeping circle

around the Dutch town, even dropping down closer that Amos himself might obtain a view of what was to be seen, without handing over the stick to his running mate and making use of the glasses.

"Hot dog! but we're kickin' up no end o' a sensation, let me tell you, Mister Pilot. Everybody runnin' this way an' that, like a mad dog'd broke loose on the community. Reckon as how these good folks never saw such a queer contraption as an amphibian plane; mebbe the blacks b'lieve we're the flyin' dragon the slant-eyed Chinks like to parade in all Chinese processions. As good as any circus or rodeo I ever 'tended; sure is, buddy."

But Amos had evidently seen quite enough, or else he disliked lodging an element of frantic fear in the hearts of superstitious and ignorant natives; for he straightened out along the old course, and they speedily left the Dutch town of Kupang far in their wake.

For some little time they continued to speed along over land, although Danny with his glasses in operation could ferret out the divisions of territory, and mark the narrow passages of sea lying between. Then they again struck the open water, although a continuous chain of much smaller islands seemed to reach toward the west.

Since Amos held on so as to keep these patches of land on their left, Danny concluded he did not

mean to put out farther into the Flores Sea, for by this time they had passed the limits of the Timor. Perhaps there would arise numerous opportunities to discover fresh and deeply interesting sights, such as it would be next to impossible to duplicate in any other portion of the known world; or on the other hand it might be Amos wished to keep in touch with these same Dutch possessions, since he had planned to make use of one of them for a sheltered port, where the big plane could lie at anchor, effectually shielded from any adverse wind.

It was now after two in the afternoon. They were taking things easy, for with those friendly tropical islands strung out like a necklace of beads they could be sure of a landing spot at any time they felt so disposed.

"Goin' to ask a favor of you, Amos," the navigator remarked at one time, as though he might have been doing some mental figuring.

"Shoot then, and have it over with; but don't ask me to try and speed up, with the idea of making Batavia by nightfall; because I just won't do it; anything else within reason you can count on, Danny."

"When you do decide to drop down, please don't pick out a teenty isle that looks like a speck from up here. We'd be more apt to find right good shelter back of a fairly decent dump; don't you think so, partner?"

"Sure do, old scout; and you can consider your wish granted; but just the same I'm dead certain there's something else back of your wanting me to do this. What's your game, buddy? Out with it, like a good boy."

"Well, it's this way, you see, Amos: we may never get 'nother chance to set eyes on a reg'lar batch of black boys on their native heath, as the books say. Mebbe, now we'd be treated to the barbaric music of the tom-tom, an' the crazy song of the squaws as they dance around the fire like we've seen 'em do on the screen. Course we've watched Hawaiian dances, with the hula-hula girls, but this might be a heap different. I'd give a lot just to say I'd been on the ground, an' lamped it all first hand. It's a go then, eh, what?"

Amos Green laughed.

"You sure are a queer dickey, Danny," he told the other; "as for myself I'm not hankering much to see that sight. Fact is, I'd rather be a respectable distance away from any war dance of savage blacks, whether they're down in African wilds or on some South Sea island. Why, Danny, some people say there are still *cannibals* to be found around in these regions; and then remember how those head-hunters still hide out in the back country of Borneo. But if so be you've set your mind on such a crazy notion, I'll go just so

far trying to please you. But I'll draw the line, and hold you to it."

"All right, partner. Fix that to suit yourself," said Danny, good-naturedly; "if at any time it looks like we might get in Dutch, why, it'll be easy to pull up anchor an' sail away; they can't chase after us a cent's worth, you know."

They continued to boom along at a fair pace, and one thing after another kept Danny busy with his glasses, whenever he could spare the time.

Somewhere around three o'clock he suddenly called out as though discovering something he must have been looking for.

"There's a bully good place for droppin' down, I'd say, old pal. Just notice how that point of land curves halfway around, makin' the cutest and safest harbor any air traveler'd want to lie in overnight. Do take a squint at the same, an' see if it suits your particular fancy, Mister Pilot."

He relieved Amos of the controls, and the latter, after scanning the island which they were rapidly approaching gave a somewhat dubious assent.

"I reckon it'll do good enough, Danny, though for my part I'd rather the curve of land lay another way. But at least there's plenty of room for us to make a quick get-away if the occasion arises for such a thing. So we'll drop down, and look over the lay of the land."

CHAPTER XIII

THE TROPICAL ISLAND LAGOON

"Seems to be O.K., eh, Amos?"

Danny made this remark after they had alighted on the quiet water within the lagoon back of the coral ring of reefs, that possibly ran completely around the island they had selected for the scene of their night's encampment.

As usual Amos had made one of his unbeatable "landings," alighting on the surface of the bay much as a duck might have done, or perhaps a sea gull. It was a most picturesque scene they took in as they cast their eyes about them—the near-by palms, some of them bearing huge bunches of green and ripe coconuts, hanging over the water's edge; the graceful curve of the shore where it ran out in a half-moon curve; then there were the little waves, running up on the sandy beach with a murmurous sound very like a lullaby; and back of the strand lay what seemed to be a dense growth, that had all the aspect of a mysterious jungle, in which almost any sort of surprise might lurk to ambush the unwary invader.

"It will do," assented Amos; "but I don't

think it would be safe for us to go ashore. Those woods are too close by, and an arrow tipped in deadly poison could reach us as easily as you'd fall off a slippery log."

"Hot dog! is that the way you look at it, partner? Me, I was just a-layin' sweet plans for a little fire, and some supper cooked over it. But after all I reckon you're right; and besides we've always made it our game to play safety first; so I'll crab that scheme, and we'll do our eatin' out o' cans."

Nevertheless Danny continued to keep an eye on that crooked line of shore, as though his imagination might be peopling the bush with all manner of menacing perils, from wild savages to monster chimpanzees, such as he understood were still to be found on Borneo, and its neighboring islands.

The anchor had been plunged overboard and they floated indolently on the lagoon. As the burning sun dropped lower and lower the heat gave promise of slackening, at least in a small measure. Danny had been panting for some time, and letting his thoughts rove back to other nights, when their chief concern had been to avoid having their fingers and toes frost-bitten, because of the intense cold to be met with in the rarified atmosphere encountered when passing over great mountains down in South America; or when up in the Polar regions. It seemed as if

Danny could always get more or less consolation from these wide contrasts. Some people are so constituted.

They did not seem to be at all sharp-set with hunger, owing doubtless to the depressing heat. After the farce of feeding had been gone through with, the two voyagers sat there and watched the light clouds sail past far above, and naturally wished they were enjoying the cooling breezes to be found at such an altitude.

"I'm tellin' the world this is sure the hottest place I ever struck, barrin' none," Danny complained, as he wiped his reeking forehead with his red bandanna kerchief, which he had fastened around his neck cowboy fashion, a trick he had learned in younger years when on a ranch out in prairie land. "Seems like it oughtn't to be a country for white folks to live in. Right now I'd say the world was a-goin' to go up in fire before mornin' came 'round; it's so heavy, so dead sickenin'. Whee! what wouldn't I give for a cool breeze to come along and freshen things up? Say, partner, d'ye reckon this is the reg'lar thing out here in these Dutch East Indies—the balmy Spice Islands we used to read about and hanker after?"

"Ask me something easy, old sea scout. This is my first introduction to this section of the map; but it's certainly what you'd call a corker of a hot evening; little sleep for us if this holds right on. We'll have to sit up, and keep pumping our

lungs full of air just to stay alive. But then we've been in all sorts of bad holes, and can stand a heap, by grinning, and trying to forget the weather; so don't keep harping on it, and moaning so, Danny. It'll all come out in the wash."

"Just as you say, Amos, but somehow I can't help thinkin' there might be some cause back of this heavy, humid heat that makes you feel like you weighed a thousand pounds, more or less. Gee whiz! talk about an ice cream soda! I'd give ten iron boys right this minute just to poke my nose in one."

"Just the same you must admit we're looking at one of the richest sunsets you'd run across in a month of Sundays," Amos told him.

"A heap *too* rich to suit me," grumbled the perspiring navigator; "looks like doomsday might be hangin' just 'round the corner, with all that gory paint splashed over the western sky. I saw a prairie fire once and it haunted me in my dreams for many a moon. Fog an' fire are the two things that get my goat; seem to gimme a feelin' like I was side-slippin', an' in for a crash."

"Brace up and forget your troubles, old man; time's coming when I expect to hear you wishing you could run across a bit of this same heat, Danny."

"Course you mean when we're headin' for the moon, a-crossin' the Himalayas. But cold never did make me whine like heat does, as you know

right well. All right, I'm goin' to laugh it off, like you say I ought," but although he did try to show signs of devil-may-care merriment, it sounded rather forced.

Soon another source of trouble arose to draw his attention.

"Skeeters and nippers to beat the band—acres of the hungry little beasts in the bargain. Keeps a feller battin' right along to chase 'em away and that makes me sweat worse than ever. Drat it, where did I put that powder we used up at our camp on Point Barrow, Alaska, where we ran into such swarms o' the savage pests? We've just *got* to rub it all over our faces an' hands, 'less we mean to let 'em eat us alive!"

Fortunately the powdered ferris root, procured somewhere in this same East Indian archipelago, proved as effectual as on the previous occasion, and by degrees Danny got over his fresh affliction.

Night had set in, with the moon heading toward its three-quarter stage riding in the dark heavens amidst a glorious company of silvery stars, many of which were never glimpsed by dwellers in northern latitudes. Only for the terrific heat Amos felt that he could really enjoy such a night, with the great fireflies sailing hither and thither like unseen messengers bearing lighted lanterns, and melodious sounds of insect life floating to their ears from the near-by shore;

intermittently he could hear the soft lapping of incoming wavelets upon the beach, while from time to time came weird cries of night birds seeking food along the edge of the lagoon.

He could not understand what had got into the customary cheery Danny to exhibit such foreboding, as though oppressed with a sense of some hovering evil; and for lack of any other excuse had finally to decide his chum must have eaten something that failed to agree with him.

Clouds began to thicken as the hour crept on apace, so that there were times when it grew almost dark. Although from sheer obstinacy Danny kept declaring he would not be able to obtain a single wink of sleep, because of the terrible heat, just the same he did in the end manage to drop off. Amos must have chuckled when he discovered how the grumbler had yielded to the drowsy god in spite of his avowed intention of staying awake.

Time passed on, with Amos securing some sleep in "job lots," as he called it—which was better than nothing, though not at all restful. In the end he, too, gave in to the demands of Nature, and forgot everything else in slumber.

The dreadful heat still persisted, as though the everlasting fires deep down under the crust of the earth might be forging nearer and nearer to the surface. Amos stirred frequently but gave no sign of being awake. It was something of a

shock therefore when an eager hand pulled at his arm and he caught a low voice demanding attention.

"Amos, wake up, wake up!" were the words that greeted him as he burst the bonds of sleep and realized where he was.

"Hello! there, Danny, what's doing?" he asked, softly.

"Listen, partner. Thought at first I was still dreamin', but it's the real stuff. Don't you hear 'em goin' it, dronin' like a hive o' bees? That's the way they always do begin and get louder an' louder as they keep a-goin'. Gee whiz! but don't the old tom-toms make queer music that sets you all a-quiverin', like you were bein' fed up with crazy music? Hot dog! my wish has come true, as sure as anything!"

"Tom-toms!"

Amos sat up suddenly and instantly caught the weirdest of all possible sounds!

CHAPTER XIV

A MARINE EARTHQUAKE

There was something barbaric, thrilling, nerve-tingling about the half-muffled sounds that carried to the ears of Amos Green, as he sat there in his section of the cockpit of the anchored amphibian—something most menacing, as well as mysterious, in the dull beating of native tom-toms, rising by degrees in power and speed as the drummers began to grow more and more excited.

Both Amos and Danny, as if by some instinct, readily picked out the quarter from whence the growing noise proceeded. It was down on the spit of land back of which they had found such excellent shelter from any rolling billows that were apt to sweep in from the open, treacherous sea.

"They've lighted a fire, don't you see, brother?" gurgled Danny, a bit awed, apparently, now that his late fervent wish seemed about to be granted.

"It's getting brighter all the time, too," added Amos.

"I c'n see figgers movin' around, weavin' in

an' out like they'd already started their funny old dance; music's pickin' up considerable in the bargain, an' they keep exact time with the grumble o' the tom-toms, Amos. Hot dog! seems most like I must be a-dreamin', an' got the willies. But shucks! is this a ghost dance? Don't hear even a whisper so far. Thought they whooped it up like crazy things when they heard that throbbin' music of the war drums. There, the one that's a-leadin' the music strikes up faster now, and seems like somethin's bound to happen right quick. I've got my bully little repeatin' rifle handy, Amos. Only I wish there was another of them devil-spittin' Roman candles aboard, so's to give 'em the scare o' their lives."

"We won't need either this time, Danny," said the other, in a decided way that the uneasy navigator understood full well to mean business; Amos must have arranged matters in his own mind, as usual, so as not to be caught unprepared when a possible storm broke over their heads.

"Got a scheme, have you, partner? Let's have it, for I'm feelin' in my bones that them jumpin' islanders must know 'bout our bein' over here, an' as soon's they work up enough o' the fightin' spirit they'll try to rush us."

"Let them come, who cares?" Amos told him; "if my plans work out right they won't find us here when they launch their canoes, and come out."

"Huh! mean we'll fly the coop—vamose—clear out, ourselves—is that your racket, brother?" questioned Danny, eagerly.

"When I give the word you get that anchor aboard like hot cakes, old scout; if it holds out on you have your knife handy so you can cut the rope. We can afford to lose that pet folding anchor if necessity compels; but to hang back and risk having them pile in on us is another thing. Get that, do you, Danny boy?"

"Sure do, buddy; an' my knife's as sharp as a razor blade in the bargain. But listen to the racket, will you? They're gettin' roused up to beat the band, an' 'fore long we'll see the whole bunch lopin' this way like a pack o' half-starved wolves. Say, this is some excitement, let me tell you. That tom-tom stuff is all that they described it to be in the magazine article. Makes you feel a fierce creepin' sensation goin' up an' down your spine, like you'd had a bucket o' ice water thrown over you. I'm shiverin' like fun. Must be on 'count of the thrill I'm soakin' in, 'cause I reckon the night air's just as red hot as it was a while ago. Zowie! but they're a-goin' like mad now, an' I c'n hear some o' the black boys a-startin' to pipe up. Sure everything's O.K. for a quick get-away, are you, Amos?"

"The tide is holding our nose in just the right position, for you remember there was a long sweep of open water over yonder—more than

plenty for the boat to get going first-class. Of course, it's some risky trying to get a rise when it's so dark; but I'm depending on instinct, which is second nature to an old air pilot."

Not a sign of a quiver was there to Amos Green's steady voice, showing what splendid control he had over his nerves; while Danny was shivering with excitement, his teeth rattling together much like the throbbing castanets held in the fingers of a Spanish bolero dancer.

It was one of the tensest moments in the lives of these young and intrepid aviators, something they could never entirely forget in all the years to come. All that Amos was awaiting before giving Danny the word was some forward movement on the part of the dusky mob of acrobatic dancers; and when that crisis arrived they would speedily discover whether his confidence was misplaced or warranted.

"Wow! they're primed for the rush all right, buddy. Look at 'em carryin' on like they'd 'bout lost their heads! Shall I pull up the mudhook, Amos?"

"Wait a bit, you wild boy. There's something queer about the way they're carrying on. Don't you see? Not a man-jack is heading this way, but they're dropping down to the ground, some even rolling around as if a colony of snakes had been let loose and were striking at their legs."

"Great Cæsar's ghost but you're right, part-

ner. Whatever ails the mob, d'ye reckon? The old medicine man or witch doctor must've thrown a spell over the bunch, seems like. And say, look how queer the water in the lagoon is actin', would you, brother? Hot dog! must be the end o' the world's comin' along, an' everythin's turnin' upside down. Why, I'm a-feelin' sick at the pit o' my poor little tummy—let's scoot out o' this rummy place, Pal Amos!"

"Hold on, no hurry, Danny. They've just about forgotten all about us, I do believe, and are in a panic over something or other. I've got a hunch about what it may mean. If only we were ashore you'd understand all right; because, like as not both of us would be falling on our faces, too, unable to stand up!"

Danny uttered a half roar, in which surprise and alarm seemed to be blended.

"What's that, Amos? Do you mean it's an *earthquake?*" he cried out in sheer dismay, clutching the arm of his chum anxiously.

"Just what I do think," came the reply, and there might have been detected just a slight symptom of unsteadiness in the usually even tones of the pilot. "I can see the trees shuddering in a way that never happened to me before; and it's even affected the smooth water in the lagoon!"

"Earthquake! Wouldn't *that* be the limit? Seems like we reckoned we'd near exhausted all

the thrills there were on this old football; but here's a new one on us. 'Counts for my havin' that gone feelin' down below stairs—I've read it affects a feller that way till he gets hard boiled an' used to the shakes. But say, them ginks are sure near locoed, seems like; an' livin' in this earthquake and volcano infested sea island region at that!"

"They know what it means to have the ground rock underfoot. What terrible things often follow such a series of shocks! Don't forget this is one of the worst places on the face of the earth for convulsions of Nature—the home of volcanoes —a place where the fires under the crust of the earth are forever breaking through. I've read about the mighty outbreak at the island of Krakatao, which is located between here and the Malay Peninsula. For all we know this may be just another terrific smash on that same island."

"But we don't feel it much out here on the water," said Danny, managing to get a better grip on himself.

"Not in the same way they do on land," Amos told him; "but you can see how agitated the water is all around us; and we've already swung around exactly opposite, with our nose pointing to the land. That means there is a heavy suction starting in, such as always follows an earthquake shock at sea. Along the coast of Japan as a rule a tidal wave comes rushing back one or several

hours afterwards, swamping whole villages, and drowning hundreds of people who live in the lowlands."

"Whee! d'ye think that sort of thing c'n happen here, buddy?" exclaimed the freshly alarmed Danny.

"Just as like as not," he was calmly told; "but there's no cause for alarm, just so the water isn't all drained from this lagoon, leaving us helpless to make a get-away. We must watch sharp, and if there's any danger of such a thing happening we'll pull out."

"Huh! this is a queer experience I didn't ever expect to run smack up against; an' to think of it all comin' along in one night, too! Must be a red-letter night for our crowd, like as not. But see how the black boys are hittin' for the high timber, will you; reckon they've clean forgot all about the big bird that lit on the water of their home lagoon? There goes the last bunch a-gallopin' off like fun, not carin' whether school keeps or not. Same old Amos Green luck handin' us out a friendly deal. Seems like even the forces o' Nature work overtime for its favorites."

"We can lie here for the present," the pilot went on to say, "and listen to catch any unusual sound from out at sea; for the rush of a monster tidal wave would give us ample warning in time to hop off. Take this paddle, Danny, and keep testing the stage of water—if it keeps going down

we'll have to be off to the upper airlanes; because it'd be dangerous for a ship as frail as ours to be caught either in this trap here, or within half a mile of the surface of the sea."

Danny readily accommodated himself to the novel task. Somehow the peculiar condition of the atmosphere, so heated and so unearthly quiet, continued to give him those delicious little thrills. Everything was so novel, so fraught with overhanging peril of a character he had never before experienced.

Amos had turned on his little electric torch so the other might mark the handle of the paddle belonging to the collapsible dinghy. It pleased Danny to call out his reckoning, especially when he discovered that the water was steadily growing more and more shallow, owing to that mysterious drawing power which Amos had attributed to the volcanic eruption following the tremors of the earth.

"Say, partner," sang out Danny, at one time, "did you happen to notice how there seemed to be queer groanin's and grumblin's oozing up out of the earth at the time the shocks were goin' on—just like some old, old man might be a-wheezin' an' a-complainin'—I'll never forget how shivery it sounded, with that bunch o' blacks a-rollin' around like they'd lost their bearin's, an' couldn't stand up straight to save their souls. Wow!

some country this Dutch East Indies, be—lieve *me!*"

Time crept along, and Danny had begun to yawn, as though feeling sleepy after so much excitement, when suddenly he noticed something that still further aroused his curiosity.

"Look off to the west, Amos. Did you ever set eyes on such a red sky? Must be some big fire over there, I'd wager, to make the ceilin' look like blood."

"You never said truer words, Danny," his companion immediately told him, "for that's caused by the spouting volcano shooting up red-hot stones hundreds of feet high; and it's right on the course we've marked on our chart!"

CHAPTER XV

ONCE MORE IN CLOUDLAND

"Now, wouldn't that jar you for a fact?" Danny observed, with a touch of disgust, as well as concern and wonder in his voice; "with the lava an' ashes a-pilin' out of the vent, as well as red-hot stones! How far away could the old spouter be, do you reckon, Pal Amos?"

"Oh! hundreds of miles, anyway," came the prompt answer.

"And you kind of b'lieve it's that Cracked Toes volcano that they say every sunset for weeks made such a fierce red haze all around the world years ago—tho' I was a heap too young even to know about it—could that be, partner?"

"As like as not—it's on a small island of the same name, and said to be the toughest nut of a volcano ever known, even Vesuvius and Ætna not being in the same class with Krakatao. But when we get up a mile or more in the air it might be that with our fine glass you could see something of the fireworks."

"Hot dog! that'd tickle me 'most to death, to be able to say I'd lamped a gen—u—ine spouter doin' it's little stunt! What queer happenin's

we do manage to stack up against, eh, Old-timer?"

"All in the game, Danny. If chaps like our team insist on running wild all around the world, and in the strangest spots ever heard of, why, they must expect to take the knocks with the soft going. A volcano in action is only an everyday occurrence with us!"

"Sure it is, partner, a mere bag'telle, as the French put it, and not to be bothered with more'n twenty-four hours. But how long do we hold the fort in this lagoon, I want to know?"

"Might as well hang on here till dawn, unless we get warning that some sort of giant tidal wave is striking this way," Amos went on to explain. "You know as well as I do that taking off in a bay you've never explored isn't the safest thing to tackle in the dark; though if it comes to it I'm ready to take the chances, rather than stick it out, and meet the rush of the sea. So far as I can make out the trembler stopped shaking things up on shore some little time back, for I haven't noticed the coconut trees leaves rustling like they did, and those nasty rumblings deep down in the earth have about played out. Taken in all, we've got a whole lot to be thankful for, Danny."

"You said something then, boy. Think of that gang of blacks runnin' like wildfire. I'm wonderin' if they'll jump off when they get to the

other side of this tight little island; to swim around, thinkin' anything's better than stickin' to the shakin' land. Gee whiz! this is some game, I'm telling the world; but I'll breathe a lot better when we're up a mile or two nearer the clouds."

They continued to sit there, listening, with every nerve on the alert, for any suspicious distant sound that might mean a great wave was approaching the shore, ready to sweep far up on the island in its elemental fury.

Quite a long time elapsed, with nothing occurring to give the alarm; but then Danny did not get much consolation from that circumstance, since Amos had told him sometimes such a return of the waters did not occur until as many as half a dozen hours had passed. It all depended on the sucking power of the earth tremor. He illustrated by mentioning the stretching of a rubber band, and then suddenly releasing one end, causing a violent recoil.

Then Danny made a sudden suggestive movement, at which his chum called out:

"You're hearing it too, are you, Danny boy?"

"Seem to get somethin' or other," replied the other, hoarsely, as though he understood the crisis was fast drawing closer. "Sounds like the far-away roar o' a freight pullin' up the grade around the foothills o' the dear old Rockies. How many times have I listened to that sound when waitin' for the jumpin'-off signal at some

way station. Reckon it means she's comin' for us full tilt, eh, Pal Amos?"

"No doubt about it," affirmed the pilot; "and I can catch it louder than at first, which shows we've no time to lose if we mean to skip out, and give that wall of water the merry laugh. So get that mudhook aboard in a jiffy, brother."

Danny hastened to comply, realizing that when his chum spoke in such a peremptory fashion there was need for quick action.

"Now grab up the paddle, and slew her nose around a bit to sta'board, so we'll have our head toward any wind that may come along in front of the big push—that's the idea, buddy; so here we go, lickitty-split!"

The motor commenced to throb loudly, and the propeller to spin with lightning-like revolutions, so that they immediately started to push through the still waters of the lagoon, their progress growing in speed with every passing second. Then Amos lifted her successfully and they began to climb the steep staircase of the wind most gallantly.

Danny hung there, with his face turned toward the open sea, watching to find out if he could indeed catch any indication to prove their theory correct, in so far as the oncoming tidal wave was concerned. Even above the roar of the exhaust, and the whirr of the propeller, he fancied he could catch faintly some tremendous stir down below,

as though the fight was on for mastery among the rival elements of wind and water, with a third actor—fire—in full swing in the distant west, where the red-hot lava and subterranean stones were being hurled out of the gaping crater of Krakatao.

It appeared to the entranced observers as though they were taking part in one of the mightiest conflicts of Nature, and that they must "keep on their toes," and fight desperately, if they wished to come through unscathed.

There could be no doubt whatever but that a little hurricane type of wind had accompanied the returning sea in its mad onward rush to fill a vacancy; for even at the height they had by this time attained the plane wabbled and tugged, this way and that, like an unruly horse set free, with a bunch of burrs under his tail to goad him to frenzy.

But Amos sat there in full control of his aërial steed. Besides, as they continued their upward climb they were constantly putting more space between the zooming amphibian and the danger that lay below, so that its influence for doing harm lessened rapidly.

Danny still quivered like a sensitive plant when touched by a finger, for his nerves were all on edge. He realized, however, the worst was past, and that the novel as well as terrifying adventure had been successfully negotiated.

So he proceeded calmly to arrange the simple harness connected with the extremely useful head phones, by means of which he and his chum could carry on an exchange of views despite the clamor of the working parts of the flying machine.

Then suddenly remembering what Amos had said about there being a slight possibility of his seeing some signs of the dreadful commotion taking place away off to the west, he applied the binoculars to his eager eyes, and surveyed the field.

As they still kept moving upward this horizon was being constantly enlarged, which gave him a better chance for making discoveries.

He was thrilled when he believed he was able to see some faint signs of fire in the distance, though he could not be sure. It seemed next to impossible that this could be a fact, considering how many hundred miles the spouting fire geyser must be from them.

Danny felt a touch of bitter disappointment. He would have considered it one of the proudest moments of his whole life, could he have soared directly above the active volcano, and gazed upon its thrilling operations. But at any rate they had experienced something to boast of in times to come, and half a loaf was better than no bread, Danny told himself.

Once Amos had stilled the motor's roaring, to

coast or glide for a dozen seconds, more or less; and both of them felt certain they could detect sounds of some appalling conflict far beneath, which undoubtedly must proceed from the smash of the high tidal wave along the shore of the island where they had passed the earlier part of the night. In imagination Amos could see the havoc which would have followed this battering of the coast, and the terror of those superstitious blacks who must believe the end of the world was at hand.

Now that they had attained a high ceiling, Amos leveled off and proceeded to take up his true course. Dawn was coming at a fast pace, and the lurid hue of the western sky gradually died away; though that was no indication of any halt in the activities of the erupting vent of the internal fires.

Danny, wishing to hold intercourse with his mate, now insisted upon taking over the controls while Amos arranged his ear phones. Things were moving along nicely, with nothing to worry about, save the fact that it felt a bit cold at such an altitude—at least in contrast to the sickening torrid heat to which they had been subjected for many hours; and this could easily be remedied by adding to their attire in the way of a sweater, or a leather jacket.

It was just like Danny to make use of an old

and much revered slogan when he spoke his first words after returning the stick to his pal.

"And the air mail flies, come hurricane, come spoutin' volcano; it don't matter what happens, Uncle Sam's letter bags must be put through, eh, brother?"

"Well, did you see anything off yonder, boy?" asked Amos.

"Thought I did; but I reckon the wish was father to the thought," replied the other.

"The distance is too great to cover, for a fact, and I should have known that in the start, Danny. But we're heading toward the scene of the outbreak, and if it keeps on working for a day or more, perhaps we'll yet get a glimpse of the circus. To be frank with you, it strikes me an experience with an earthquake and a tidal wave, all at the same time, ought to satisfy even a greedy chap who'd like to run across a fresh thriller every day of his life."

"Meanin' little Danny, I s'pose, buddy, which is a fact. But if all goes well with us on this leg of our run, we ought to turn in at Batavia some time this afternoon, where we'll learn more 'bout that spouter. How 'bout a bit of breakfast, now the sun's a-peepin' 'bove sea level back there, and our old island's vanishing like smoke in the distance?"

"Strikes me in the right spot, boy; for you know we didn't have much appetite last night,

on account of the fierce heat, and muggy atmosphere. Up in this cloudland, where it's so chilly, I'm feeling ready to treat myself to any old grub you can pass along, with a swig or two of lukewarm coffee to wash it down. So get busy, and see what our eat-box holds. I'm meaning to drop down to where it's some warmer so early in the morning."

CHAPTER XVI

THE ZIGZAG FLIGHT OVER JAVA

By the time Danny had the meager spread ready, the amphibian was passing through a much lower strata of atmosphere, with the island mottled sea in easy distance of the strong glasses of the precious binoculars.

Here at this early morning hour they found a perfectly delightful and invigorating condition of affairs, so that as they munched their food, and exchanged occasional words, they felt at ease, "contented with the world," as Danny was moved to say.

Being more than eager to again resume his observations, Danny did not linger long over his meal; so that presently he was diligently taking notes of the myriad of queer and really fascinating sights that were being continually offered for his inspection, both on land and on sea.

The islands, large and small, were strung out in almost a direct line from east to west, commencing at Timor, and keeping on until Java was reached. They seemed to be for the most part covered with dense vegetation and forests, that hid much of the terrain and its inhabitants.

Danny was forced to indulge in vague speculations as to the deeply interesting scenes this verdure concealed from his restless eyes.

On the water of the Flores Sea, he picked up a variety of objects that had to do with the bold native voyagers, primitive islanders who fulfilled their destinies after their own fashion, having little to do with the Dutch authorities located in the towns and cities.

It was a frequent sight to discover *proas* constructed mostly of bamboo, with a frail cabin, open at both ends for the free circulation of air, paddled by a crew of four Malays, almost stripped of their garments, and working methodically, the helmsman seated on a bamboo stool in the shelter of the cabin that was itself covered with a roof of dried palm leaves.

It gave Danny no end of boyish delight to notice the sudden "near-panic" every time these native islanders discovered that swooping monster bird passing over their heads, how frantically they urged their craft along, headed toward the shore, and evidently expecting to be attacked by the modern roc.

But Danny knew very well that all these objects of interest were bound to pale almost into insignificance when in due time they had reached the eastern shore line of the famous island of Java, where, he understood, all the finest coffee in the world was grown; while the enterprising

Dutch burghers, whose people had carried on the entire business of the country for many years, lived under unique conditions well worth observing.

Along about this time Danny made a discovery that of course excited his interest and curiosity. This was the fact that for some unknown reason Amos the pilot had chosen to halt their flight to some extent, so they were now just leisurely "loafing on the job," moving along at about half-speed.

"What's the big idea, partner?" he demanded; "taken a sudden notion to save gas, and the motor—hope you haven't found anything goin' wrong, so we'd have to duck down to the water, an' tinker things a bit?"

"Get that out of your mind right away, buddy," the other told him. "I began to realize that if we keep zooming along in that style we'd be apt to fetch up at our next port of call—which is Batavia, you remember—along in the early afternoon. That's when the sun's just fierce, so that business is nearly laid aside, and every man who has to be abroad carries some sort of a white linen sunshade, and also dresses as lightly as possible."

"Guess that's so, old chum; and you decided it was better for us to keep up here, where at any rate you c'n get your breath. Now I consider that a bright thought, an' chump that I am,

it gets me wonderin' how it didn't strike *me*. Huh! no question but what we'll get our fill o' the hot tamale stuff durin' nights. I'm agreein' with you it's our best move to slow up, and take things right easy. We've got plenty of gas for a twenty-hour crawl; an' besides, we'll be able to take on any amount more at Batavia. So let her loaf along while we look over these queer old spicy islands that run along like a lady's necklace."

"I figure that we're now on the borders of the Java Sea," announced the pilot a little later on; "of course, there's nothing to tell just when you leave the Flores, and push into the larger body of salt water, so you have to make some sort of stab at it in order to figure out where you are."

"Huh! little do we care," remarked the watchful Danny, his eyes glued to the "hindsights" of his binoculars; "some fellers tell yuh all coons look alike to them, an' that's what I say 'bout these same tropical spice islands—I couldn't tell one from another for the life o' me, lookin' down on 'em as we do in passin' over."

"Inside of another hour I reckon on striking the big push, and then we'll drop down still more; because we'll want to see what the towns we pass over look like. Lucky chaps, eh, partner, to have such a fine chance to poke into the secrets of these East Indian countries, without getting in any jam? What makes you shake your head, and

frown, I'd like to know, when you ought to be feeling as happy as a clam, seeing what you do of this panorama?"

Danny laughed, and looked a bit ashamed.

"Shucks! it takes *you* to read a face, Amos. I was just back again on that same old trail, wonderin' what that second surprise he's fixed up for us c'n be. Gives me heaps to fuss over in my mind, you know; but up to now I don't seem to be makin' much progress. I've figgered on 'bout every trick we've ever chinned over, that could help a pilot run his crate safer and faster'n he ever did before, but they, none of 'em, seem to fit in."

He thought it a bit strange that Amos failed to take him to task, and tell him to "lay off that stuff," which was taboo; instead the other just grinned and held his peace.

"Hot dog!" Danny was whispering to himself, noting that significant grin on his pal's face; "that makes me sure he *does* know somethin' 'bout the other surprise party, which he's keepin' from his own blood brother. Guess I'll never get a smell o' that game till we bring up in Singapore; but it sure does peeve me a heap to get the odor, an' not a bite o' the fine supper Mr. Carstairs has dished up for his boys. Hang it all, why can't I grab hold of the tantalizin' answer that keeps a-temptin' me right along? Sometimes I'm even formin' my lips to shout out the

solution, an' then, shucks! it slips away from me like a flip o' smoke, carried off on the mornin' air."

It was a short time before noon that Danny reported what seemed to be an unusually extensive island looming up ahead.

"Must be that Java island all right," he told Amos, who agreed that undoubtedly this was a fact.

"And it settles one thing," the pilot continued, "we are now passing over the sea by that name, a particular stretch of water that always had a strong fascination for me, away back to when I first began to study geography in school; so that I've indulged in lots of daydreams of sometime setting eyes on this very spot. So dreams *do* come true, if only you wait, and help things along. Now we'll go down a bit more, and begin to soak it all in, buddy."

It appeared that Amos had already settled on their plan of action, once they reached the wonderful island of the Far East. In order not to lose any of the novel sights such as they anticipated running across, he meant to follow a zigzag course, now flying over the coast line, with its numerous indentations and little bays; and then swinging off into the interior of the island, so as to pay a flying visit to some town or city, which was marked with a red circle on the chart he kept within range of his vision, while attend-

ing to his duties as master pilot wielder of the joy stick.

On their first little trip inland they made many fresh discoveries that kept the deeply interested Danny calling out in glee, demanding every now and then that his comrade take the glasses, and scan things below. Whenever the plane soared above a town its coming created considerable excitement, for they could see people, stout burghers, women, folks, and myriads of children, hurrying this way and that, every one with his or her neck stretched to the utmost in an endeavor to watch the flight of this wonderful messenger from the clouds.

As aviation has progressed more or less in these regions, under the urgent enterprise of the Royal Dutch Air Lines, it was getting to be a common occurrence for some sort of plane to be sighted by those in the various cities, even though landing-fields were scarce, and none of the best. But all this would soon be of the past, for the authorities had planned great things along the lines of air-mail facilities, which would demand special airdromes, and all the up-to-date inventions that go with them, including searchlights for night launching of ships; beacon and boundary lights, to insure a safe landing after nightfall in the tropics; and every other device for assisting the daring pilot in following his hazardous occupation.

Now it was a coffee plantation that brought cries of boyish delight from Danny Cooper—anon a field of what he fancied must be aromatic spice plants, or it might be trees—like cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and such well-remembered ingredients that are included in puddings, cakes, and all the other beloved things that enter so largely into the life of an ordinary American lad.

Besides this, he felt certain he was looking on any number of tropical fruit trees, such as orange and lemon; pineapple fields; banana plantations, where huge bunches of the delicious fruit grew in profusion, some just turning a bright yellow or red, and making Danny's mouth fairly water with anticipation which, of course, could not be gratified just then.

He also realized that there were many fruits peculiar to the climate, and with which he himself had no personal acquaintance, his knowledge being wholly acquired through reading, and jotting down the various queer names, with the idea of testing them out, every one, when a fitting opportunity arrived, which would be on their arrival at Batavia, the capital. These consisted in part of mangoes, durians, doskoes, and rambutans, all of which were claimed to be delicious, although too tender to bear shipment to Europe or America.

So for several hours they continued skipping here and there according to the fancy of the pilot,

who was bent on giving his chum the "full value of his money," as Danny told him in sheer joy.

Now it chanced that they had come again to the coast, to see if anything out of the usual run might be encountered on sea or shore; which in a way turned out to be almost an inspiration on the part of Amos; although he never claimed to have been urged in so doing by anything like a "hunch," hinting at a new and most singular adventure, which neither of them would have missed for a good deal.

As they broke out from behind the heavily wooded stretch of land back of the shore, Danny became instantly interested in a little drama that was taking place a few miles away, and not far out on the deep, sky-blue Java Sea.

CHAPTER XVII

CLOSE QUARTERS WITH MALAY PIRATES

"Whoopee! if that ain't a reg'lar Chinese junk I'll eat my hat!" Danny was saying, in more or less excitement—"bat wings, high poop deck'n all the fixin's besides. Now I'd like to know what such a has-been craft's doin' in these waters, so far from her home port, eh, Amos, old sport?"

"It's a real junk, and no make-believe, that's right, Danny," said the other, after a good look ahead; "but you needn't be surprised at running across any sort of vessel that floats down here. These seas are the crossroads of the watery ways of the world; so it's been for ages that nearly every kind of vessel known forages around these same spice islands, seeking trade, and cargoes for home ports."

"She looks like a picture out there on that sky-blue sea, I must say, buddy mine; but what're all those smaller boats doin', makin' hot speed in her direction? Looks like a race for puttin' a pilot aboard. Must be a treacherous corner out there, where stranger boats meet up with trouble."

"I reckon you're away off your base when you

say that, Danny; let me take a look through your glasses, will you?"

"Go to it, partner; I'll wrestle with the stick while you figger things out, which same begin to look fishy to me, I own up. Wonder if we're due to run smack up against some more trouble. Does seem like we just have to be helpin' some folks out of a mess every once in a while; then why not Chinks, since they're human?"

Presently Amos started to give his opinion.

"Hit up the pace a bit, Danny. Some need of our getting out there to have a look-in. The men in those native boats are Malays, fierce-looking chaps in the bargain, and armed to the teeth!"

"What ho! *pirates* do you mean, Amos?" cried the startled navigator.

"Looks that way. They've swarmed out from the shore here; and since the junk's sails are flapping for want of a good breeze you can see how they're rapidly pulling up on her."

"Wow! and again I say wow! If this ain't the limit you c'n take my head for a football! We've helped save some Irish fishermen floatin' in an open boat after a storm, and nearly dead from hunger and thirst; towed some boatloads of Mexicans a hundred miles to the shore, after their steamer was burned to the water's edge; an' a few more episodes like that; but here we run across real Twentieth Century Malay sea-sharks right on the job o' takin' a Chinese junk by

storm; an' mebbe meanin' to murder every man-jack o' the crew. But say, where is that same crew, 'cause I don't lamp a single livin' critter aboard the junk?"

"They've thrown up the job, and hidden below, hoping to pull through with their lives—not so much because of cowardice as that they realize they're outnumbered ten to one."

"Hot dog! but here's a pretty kettle o' fish!" exclaimed Danny, once more turning over the controls to his mate, at a signal from Amos. "Looks like it might be up to us to put in our oar, an' fend off that mob o' slippery sea robbers. Uncle Sam never did stand for pirates, and back in early days didn't he bust up that combination of Tripoli marauders in the Mediterranean, with that slogan 'millions for defense, not one dollar for tribute?' But shucks; how much c'n we do, with on'y my repeatin' rifle aboard. What wouldn't I give right now if we had a nice, up-to-date machine-gun ready for business!"

"Don't forget we've got the *plane,*" commented Amos Green, meaningly; "and may be able to show these boobs some smart air tricks that'll knock their jolly plans on the head."

"What ho! partner, you gimme a bright idea then—mebbe now we might poke a scare into their hearts by doin' some stunts right over their heads calculated to make 'em sit up an' take notice—you c'n swoop down close to the water,

while I knock a few o' 'em over with my gun. Hey, was I yearnin' for a whiff o' excitement a bit back? Well, she's come along in great shape, an' I'm dead sure of gettin' my lit thrill all right, all right. Whoopee! I say, and here's where we put our oar in this mix-up!"

By this time they had covered so much of the intervening space that the seemingly deserted junk, together with the swarm of native boats of all descriptions, from Malay *dyaks* to Javanese *proas* (that had lain in ambush until the defenseless junk drifted within reach) were all close by.

It could be seen that the fierce pirates must have already discovered the onrushing amphibian, since they no longer pressed forward as before; the entire collection of lawless riffraff in the flotilla of strange boats rested on their oars and paddles. Every dark face was upturned while the plane kept rushing closer and closer. Possibly some, or all, of those dusky scoundrels had glimpsed just such a wonderful sky pilgrim dodging in and out of the clouds a mile or more overhead; but seeing a demon craft, that must have the powers of a fabled dragon at close quarters was enough to give them a bad scare.

Now Amos turned the nose of his ship straight at the bunch of boats, as though with the full intention of plunging among them. Such a hurried scattering as followed! Danny likened the frantic movement to the panic that besets a

flock of wild ducks floating on a bay, when an eagle appears stationary above in space, as though picking out his intended dinner.

Then, when close over the plunging boats, Amos swung upward again, and the piratical crew realized that their peril was over for the moment; there was a halt in their scattering, though they showed no signs of either gathering once more in such a cluster, or resuming their passage toward the drifting, defenseless junk.

"Get right above some of the boats, Amos—got a dandy lit scheme I'd like to play out—may be foolish, but who c'n tell, when you're dealin' with such vermin? Hully gee! there she goes like a plummet—hit or miss!"

Amos had just time to look and held his very breath to see Danny let go of *something*—why, it was actually one of those five-gallon tins of gasoline they had been holding back for an emergency, when accident would perhaps reduce their supplies to such an extent they must draw upon their little reserve stock.

The reckless Danny had actually drawn out the big cork, and inserted some sort of short dangling cord that might serve as a fuse; and then replaced the stopper. It had all been accomplished so quickly that before the cautious Amos realized what was in the wind the heavy can had been dropped, and was hurtling downward.

As the danger was already past so far as an explosion close to the plane went, Amos's stilled heart once more took up its accustomed beat, though it throbbed like a trip hammer in his breast. He was swinging in a wide circle at the time and, holding the stick firmly managed to take a downward look over the coaming of the cockpit.

Just in time he glimpsed some small rapidly revolving object that glistened like silver in the sunlight. Then there came a deafening crash—and a burst of appalling black smoke, in which lurid flames could be seen darting out in every direction, despite the fact that it was broad daylight! Danny's homemade bomb had certainly carried out its mission, and filled the souls of those fierce Malay sea-robbers with a wholesome respect for modern methods of warfare.

The short fuse must have burned close to the neck of the large can, and as some leak developed from the turning over of the descending object in mid-air, the anticipated explosion occurred just before the surface of the water was reached.

Exultant Danny could be heard giving vent to a wild screech of delight, which Amos understood when he discovered the fragments of a *proa* scattered upon the agitated water, with half a dozen naked Malay boatmen swimming lustily away from the spot, meaning either to head for the shore or else climb aboard some other craft.

Amos, while considerably exercised over the reckless method of attack instituted by his chum, did not "haul him over the coals" then and there for such a foolish scheme, so fraught with danger to themselves. It had worked most gloriously, which was all Danny could grasp at the time—success covered a multitude of sins, like the mantle of charity—later on he could take the other to task, and let him understand what a reckless thing he had done, simply because of his goodness of heart, and the wish to help others in distress.

"It worked all right, Danny—next door to a miracle we weren't blown sky-high ourselves in the bargain. See, the boats are putting for the shore in a great hurry; but don't try that game again. Use empty tins if you must, but not full ones. We can spare the gas, it's true, but we took big chances, boy, mighty big chances, let me tell you."

Perhaps Danny, having cooled down a bit by now, began to realize himself what a foolish thing he had started. True, it had met with signal success, but that was no excuse for his folly.

Amos was now following up the departing flotilla, and the pace of the native paddlers became vastly augmented, as they pictured a second of those dropping missiles smashing other of their frail craft. A swoop once more, like a hawk darting down to snatch a coveted fish from the shal-

lows, and he had the dusky horde of pirates scattering again; but with only one lone purpose now in their minds, that of gaining shelter behind the dense matting of bushes and scrub trees along the near-by shore.

"Got 'em goin', partner," remarked the now subdued Danny; "an' licked to a finish in the bargain. Whoopee! would you b'lieve it, the wind's comin' up again, an' fillin' the bat sails o' the old junk once more. There, some o' the Chink crew've popped up from below decks, an' are fixin' their queer matting sails to catch every whiff o' air that's stirrin'. They're movin' along right smart, too, an' it looks like we've saved the bally old junk from that Malay bunch."

Not until the last native boat had been hastily run up on the beach, and the paddlers vanished from sight amidst the dense copse, did Amos cease pursuing them; even afterwards he hovered around the spot, as if watching for some adventurous head to show itself, which happening failed to take place.

"Time to call it off, I reckon, Amos, seein' the old scow's sailin' 'long just dandy, an' they'll never catch up with her again. Huh! been some excitement for us; an' we'll have to shake hands with ourselves over another kind deed we c'n be proud of—all but that fool play o' mine, which's goin' to gimme a cold shiver every time I think o' such crazy doin's. Zowie!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE HARBOR OF BATAVIA

From that time forward, Danny lapsed into a strange condition of mind—for one of his usual loquacity, at least. He held his tongue and seemed to be busied with his thoughts. Frequent sly glances which he shot over his chum's shoulder made it quite apparent that his silence had more or less to do with Amos.

The fact of the matter was, Danny felt ashamed of his recent "break," and was worried lest his pal might never again be quite able to trust his discretion.

They continued to pass in and out, at one time with the Java Sea beneath, and then an excursion over a wide stretch of the great island would follow, it being the pilot's desire to "take a bird's-eye view" in connection with some town he had marked on his map as worthy of attention, since it was hardly likely they would ever pass this way again.

There was an endless succession of strange sights to gaze upon, making pictures that could never be duplicated in any other part of the globe; and neither of the explorers grew weary of pick-

ing them up in succession—quaint homes of the Dutch burghers, with brown-skinned workers in the vast fields, where under that tropical sun all manner of spices grew to perfection, their perfume to be eventually scattered over the entire known civilized world.

It was comparatively easy for the aërial voyagers to keep far enough up to enjoy a comfortable atmosphere, quite different from that in those sun-heated fields upon which they were looking.

Long since had the becalmed Chinese junk passed beyond Danny's range of vision; but he no longer felt any uneasiness concerning it, for when last seen the vessel with the bat-wing matting sails was scurrying along like a frightened duck, a favorable breeze having arisen. Nor was there any sign of the late piratical horde, which had been so badly "rattled" by the attack from the clouds that they seemed to have lost any desire further to molest the trading junk, all of which pleased Danny mightily.

Noon had come and gone, with Danny setting out such lunch as had been provided for the occasion; but somehow neither of them appeared to be particularly hungry, so that scant time was taken up in satisfying their requirements.

Amos really felt sorry for his comrade; knowing that Danny must be quite provoked at himself after what had happened. Accordingly he started

a conversation and managed to coax the other into a more comfortable condition of mind.

"Don't let that little error in judgment worry you, old sea scout," was his frank way of putting it; "better men than either of us have had their slip-ups, when acting under the spur of necessity, or in need of quick action. You let your heart get ahead of your reason; but no harm followed, and you sure gave those dusky buccaneers the scare of their lives. We worked in great luck, for I doubt if such a risky thing could be put through more than once in ten times. Now forget it all, Danny, boy, and cheer up. Here, take the glasses again, and have a look at the squat house in the midst of that grove of coffee trees; strikes me as the most prosperous plantation we've struck so far."

So Danny finally managed to throw off his fit of dejection, and since he felt his recklessness had been fully forgiven by his beloved chum, he was soon himself once more, which meant a merry-hearted lad, humming favorite tunes, and at peace with the world.

If anything, they were moving at a slower pace than at any previous time, a fact that caused Amos to remark:

"On few trips we've been trying to *kill time.* As a rule the opposite's the case, with our coaxing the boat to buckle down to business and knock out a few more kinks."

"That's a fact, buddy," added the other; "but then they say 'variety's the spice of life'; and where could you run up against more *spice* than right here, where the world's supply grows on bushes and trees? I'm enjoyin' every minute, an' don't care a red cent if only we fetch up in that fine harbor of Batavia along about dusk, with just time enough to get the mudhook planted in some quiet—er, sequestered nook of it, where nobody's goin' to pay any attention to our flockin' in, an' no passin' ships, steamers or even junks are apt to give us a knock in the night."

Back and forth they continued to fly, as though Amos meant to comb the entire island, leaving no nook or cranny unexplored. It was his customary habit to do everything he tackled in a thorough fashion; and besides, both of them were getting a knowledge of tropical scenes that could never be obtained by any other means than aviation.

The afternoon was now well along, and Danny pointed out most reasonably that since they were discovering more and more vessels out on the sea they must of necessity be drawing steadily closer to their intended port.

Over in the golden west the great orb of day was drawing near the low horizon; seeing which Amos quickened their pace. He was well aware of the fact that in the vicinity of the Equator there is little or no twilight, the night settling down almost suddenly just after the sun has

dropped from sight—and on the other hand the nearer the Poles the longer drawn does the dusk hold good, during the summer season at least.

"It's all right, partner," remarked Danny at length.

"Raised some sign of the city, then, have you, brother?"

"Yep—she's just dead ahead of us, an' we c'n make a bee line in—get there just in the nick of time to drop down, and throw the hook over, when I reckon we'll be seein' the city lights flare up, 'cause it'll be night. An' I want to take my affidavy this has been one of the dandiest times I've ever spent afloat—a won-der-ful day—the end of a perfect day!"

Soon Amos himself, without the aid of the glasses, could see Batavia, nestled there on the famous Tanjong harbor, where they expected to spend several days, taking in the sights, renewing their partly exhausted supplies, and picking up a few mementoes, to remind them in the future of how they successfully bridged the Seven Seas by airplane.

There did not seem to be any necessity for them to circle the city while looking for a good spot to alight; one portion of the harbor appealed to Amos as particularly desirable from their point of view, being more or less distant from the city docks with their unending bustle, and, so far as he could tell, not near any channel,

where passing vessels might endanger their safety.

Accordingly he pointed the nose of his craft directly for his goal, volplaned down, making gentle contact with the water, taxied along toward his chosen anchorage, and soon afterwards they found themselves nicely settled for the night.

Already had the last arc of the glowing sun passed out of sight and a mantle of semi-darkness fallen upon city and harbor. Doubtless Danny deplored the necessity for their eating supper aboard, since he did take measureless delight in building a fire ashore, and enjoying his meal, with plenty of room to stretch his legs, instead of being held in such cramped quarters as the cockpit of the amphibian.

"But it's gettin' near time for us to change over to the dandy *Adventure,* with a cabin so roomy that you c'n sling a cat by the tail—if you've got such an animal aboard—without duckin' your head, and knocking the skin off your knees. Guess I c'n stand it awhile longer. Amos, d'ye reckon this new boat's goin' to finish our climb up in the scale; or will the day come around when you an' me are runnin' a big ship that could carry twenty passengers, as well as heaps o' mail sacks, eh, what?"

"Excuse me from ever tackling such a job," the pilot told him in a way that admitted of no doubt as to his dislike for such a monster bus.

"I'm of a mind to say this is 'three strikes and out'—that I never want to handle anything larger than the new *Adventure* boat will be—holding every known comfort and many luxuries in the bargain. Yes, I *will* take some of that cold corn-beef, buddy; comes from our own city of Chicago, too. But it's so hot here on this water I feel like stripping off most of my clothes, and using a fan. Just the same, we've got to get used to the weather around here, which is always heated up to the saturation point. First of all we must remember not to allow ourselves to get excited, for that is bound to heat up the blood and make things feel all the worse."

That advice was meant for impulsive and easily excited Danny, as he very well knew; and being in a submissive state of mind just then he determined to profit by it.

"The accounts say," Amos went on to remark, "that Batavia is divided into the old and new town, also that most of the warehouses, built to hold stocks of dried spices, and known as *go-downs,* are to be found in the last named; which fact we'll soon learn for ourselves, because I mean to do a heap of prowling around while we're here."

"And on my part, Amos, d'ye know I'm crazy to ride in one o' those native carts drawn by a pony, an' called *dos-à-dos,* meaning back-to-back; which I 'magine must be kinder like the Irish

jaunting car. Then, too, I'm figgerin' on spendin' a lot o' my time hangin' around the native quarters, that they call slam-bangs, or somethin' like that."

"Not so bad for you, Danny, but it's *kampongs* you mean," Amos told him, laughingly; for Danny's weakness often lay in mixing up names that were new and novel to him, whether of towns, localities or persons.

"You're figgerin' on leavin' me to tend ship in the mornin', I take it, Commodore, while you hit out for the city, first o' all to trail down that Mynherr Hendrik Van Plank, that you're carryin' a letter o' introduction to from our Mr. Carstairs, who used to know him. Huh! talk to me 'bout a sailor havin' a best girl in every port, our backer's got a bully good friend who thinks the world o' him, in nigh every town and city around the whole world. Everybody b'lieves he's the whole works—the finest, whitest gent that ever walked on two legs."

"Which he is, without a question, as both of us know full well—the best sort of friend and backer any young chaps could find on the face of the earth."

"You said it all that time, buddy," agreed Danny, fervently, for he almost worshiped the sportsman millionaire who carried a golden heart with him wherever he went.

They sat there occasionally chatting, or doing

such writing as they found necessary, and listening to the myriad of strange and often unfamiliar sounds that came stealing over the water of that tropical harbor, from the hybrid city so close by, until finally both being sleepy, they settled down for the night.

CHAPTER XIX

A BREAK IN THE JOURNEY

Despite their uncomfortable position both of them managed to obtain a fairly good night's sleep; although Danny was possibly more wakeful than usual, for the various sounds of the harbor kept him guessing at times.

With the coming of the dawn both aroused, since Amos had understood this time was the choice part of the entire day—the only hour or two when the air actually had a touch of vigor and coolness about it. As the day lengthened the heat would strengthen until along about 1 P.M. when the sun was apt to be at its maximum, and almost overpowering, especially to those accustomed to the temperate zone climate.

As soon as they had dispatched breakfast, Amos made ready to go ashore in the dinky and find his way into the city; for it was essential that he meet the gentleman to whom he had been directed by Mr. Carstairs.

"No need o' takin' the cub boat, I reckon, Amos," remarked Danny just then; "for yonder comes a chap out from the shore in a clumsy rowboat—like as not, if he can spik de Anglis so we

c'n get the drift o' what he says, he'll be glad to ferry you over to the shore an' set you straight on how best to hike out for the city. When you come back I'll paddle in for you on signal. How's that for a scheme, brother?"

"Good enough, providing he can talk our kind of lingo, and is willing to get me across."

"He's a bit curious, I bet, 'cause our kind o' queer craft doesn't drop down in this Tanjong harbor more'n once in a coon's age. If he's the real Dutch article an' can't understand our gab, why, we'll have to start feedin' him the Injun high-sign—gestures an' grins an' shrugs, you know, with a clever use o' fingers thrown in for good measure."

When the rower had drawn closer, and paused to give them a long stare, as if hardly able to understand what manner of contraption they were connected with, Danny, always impulsive, gave him a hail.

"Goot mornin' londsman—come aboard an' shake hands mit usuns. Gif you my affidavy ve got no teeth mit dis here flying machine. It don't bite worth a red cent. Give it a bellyful o' gas an' it's happy as a lark. My name it is Danny Cooper, this laddie is Amos Green, and we are from California, if you know where such a place lies."

The rosy face of the stranger spread out in a real grin.

"Come off, then—you're no Dutchman if I know my beans—my name's Terence O'Rourke and I hail from County Cork," was the staggering surprise Danny received.

"Glory be! *Irish,* an' out here in Dutchland at that—how come, ye gossoon?" he burst out weakly, for he had almost lost his breath under the shock.

"Stranded here five years back last month, an' divil a chance have I ever had drift me way to pull out. But 'tis glad I am to meet up with a lad who can talk me own brogue—'tis sick I am at hearin' nothin' but Hollandese everywhere I roam. Will I shake hands, is it? Sure, I'm as pleased as Punch to do that same. Welcome to Batavia, an' make yerselves at home."

Danny gave his chum one significant look, as though to say, "See! that same Amos Green luck keeps along with us. Here's a fat chance to learn some things we want to know; and you c'n get nicely started for the city to boot."

They were soon talking with their new acquaintance, whom they found to be a lively and agreeable chap, eager to serve them to the best of his ability.

He gave them more or less information that promised to make things work smoother for Amos while enjoying his first trip to the Java metropolis, and insisted on taking him ashore, and also to start him on his way.

Accordingly they ferried over, Terence asking a multitude of questions in regard to the strange craft in which they had come, as well as the nature of their undertaking, which he could not grasp at all, he having apparently never heard of the wonderful feats in aviation circles that were stirring much of the known world, whether civilized or not.

Of course Amos managed to answer these questions without going into detail, but it was evident their coming so mysteriously had aroused a keen desire on the Irish lad's part to know more of such a fascinating topic.

The landing was soon accomplished and Amos on his way to the city, which he understood was already fully awake, and doing business in the cool of the early morning before the blazing god of the heavens took command of things, causing the ambitious to wilt and seek the shade.

Terence insisted on accompanying his new friend, to keep him from getting bewildered among the multitude of streets, many of them of a singularly crooked character, somewhat like certain old thoroughfares in lower New York and Boston which Amos could remember navigating under distressing conditions.

Thanks to having such a safe guide to lead the way Amos was saved much loss of time, and eventually found himself in the office which a sign announced to be headquarters of a large corpora-

tion dealing in coffee and spices, with the name of Hendrik Van Plank as resident manager.

Presently, while the faithful Terence cooled his heels in an outer office, Amos was shown into a sanctum where he found a pudgy little fat man with a red, round face and twinkling, blue eyes, looking at him curiously. The name of Mr. Carstairs written on the card Amos had sent in must have aroused some eagerness, for he met Amos with an outstretched hand and squeezed his digits fervently.

Then Amos delivered his letter of introduction, accepting the offer of a chair while the other read every word of the long and apparently deeply interesting communication with utmost care.

When he had finished he once more insisted on shaking hands with the sunburned young fellow, of whom he had just been reading the most astounding stories that would have struck him as absolutely impossible, had any other than his highly respected friend, the American millionaire, written the account. When he spoke, to say how delighted he would be to find an opportunity to do his good and honored friend a slight favor, Amos discovered that although Mynherr Van Plank may have been a real Dutchman, his English was "all to the good," as Danny would say; so it began to look as though they were going to have things made easy while they lin-

gered about quaint old Batavia, drinking in the innumerable odd scenes that could be met with on every hand.

They talked for nearly an hour, and so interested was the manager in what his young guest told him that he dismissed all business from his mind for the entire day. He had allowed Amos to glance over what Mr. Carstairs had written, in order to assure him the writer reposed such entire confidence in Mynherr Van Plank's close-mouthed qualities that his "boys" could tell him anything they wished, with an assurance that it would never go any further.

"I will take you around to meet the consul," he finally remarked, when his visitor evinced a desire to be moving. "This afternoon, when the sun is well down in the west, I am going to call upon you, to see the wonderful boat in which you have been accomplishing so many of those magnificent undertakings; and also make the acquaintance of your close 'pal' as you call him; for I shall be expecting to carry you both off to my house to meet my wife and family at dinner. But by that time I expect to have made arrangements with the wife of a good friend of mine, who is an enthusiastic airman, now up in the Philippines with his new flying boat, and heading for Shanghai on a wager—he has a very complete hangar on the shore, which is idle during his absence, and which I am positive I can secure to hold your

craft while you honor our city with your presence."

This last information greatly pleased Amos, for if he and Danny had to stand guard over their valuable possessions while the amphibian was anchored in the harbor, it would make it difficult as well as unpleasant for them to see the city and surrounding country in company, one being compelled to be on duty to watch that thieves did not play havoc with things and sadly interfere with the continuation of their air voyage.

In due time Amos was made acquainted with the American consul serving in this far-away end of the world, and found him a most agreeable sort of chap; naturally he expressed considerable interest in the appearance of these young Americans, former air-mail pilots of Uncle Sam's service, in the Far East, but Amos fed him gingerly with details of their long journey, since the fewer persons who knew the real facts the better their secret would be kept.

When he and Terence started back it was aboard a *dos-à-dos* cart, with its diminutive pony between the shafts, for Amos was anxious to experience the novelty of just such a strange ride. Then, too, this allowed them to tarry in one of the native *passars* or markets, where Terence skillfully selected a vast variety of appealing fruits for the strangers to test, many of which were utterly foreign to their knowledge, but which the

Irish lad assured Amos they were likely to enjoy very much, since the staggering heat kept one thirsty most of the time.

Arrived close to the anchored plane the dumpy rowboat owned by Terence permitted them to carry all their purchases across the stretch of open water in one load.

They forced the accommodating Irishman to stay long enough to join them in a midday lunch that consisted for the most part of delicious fruit. Danny had been pleased to learn how his chum had got on with Mynherr Van Plank, and began to look forward with interest to a supper at the gentleman's bungalow, where they would learn just what these worthy Dutch folks knew about keeping a hospitable home so far away from their native land.

An hour or two after Terence had left, with promises of returning in the morning to renew his association with these delightful visitors, a small motor boat came put-putting along, and Amos recognized the pudgy figure of Mynherr waving his handkerchief violently in the bow.

Danny took to the amiable little gentleman from the moment he felt that friendly hand-clasp; and later on in an aside to his mate remarked how nice it was that all the warm friends of Mr. Carstairs, whom they had been meeting from time to time in various parts of the world where their adventurous air journeys had called

them, seemed to be most extraordinarily sociable and good fellows, whereat Amos had remarked succinctly:

"Just what caused Mr. Carstairs to pick them out as his friends. Like attracts like, you know, Danny. That's why I cottoned to *you* so long ago, for somehow I recognized a chap after my own heart!" This observation appeared to please the other very much, to judge from the fond look he bent on Amos.

Little trouble was experienced in towing the amphibian back of the motor boat to the landing stage of the Aufterheide hangar, in which it was speedily installed, with the double doors securely locked and the keys in Amos's pocket.

It was just about sundown when they drew up in a seven-passenger car belonging to Mynherr, and entered a wide-stretching bungalow that somehow had a "homey" air about it.

CHAPTER XX

TAKING IT ALL IN

At the home of their new friend, Amos and Danny had one of the most joyous times of their eventful lives. Here they met the *vrow* of Mynherr, who would make almost two of that worthy gentleman; yet despite this superiority she seemed to adore and look up to her mate, as a most dutiful wife might do.

There were four of the *childer*—three girls, and one boy—from Gretchen the oldest, somewhere around twelve years of age, down to Tessie the baby, a roly-poly, beautiful child of four, Wilhelmina being eight and Hendrick ten.

Such a chatty time they had of it at the supper table, with the lady of the house asking questions, apparently duly admiring the two adventurous young Americans, and hanging on everything either of them said.

The children were also fairly devouring their guests with eager eyes, for surely these gallant aviators from the far-away United States must fulfill their conception of what genuine *heroes* are made of; and was it not ten times more delightful to sit at table and listen to heroes

modestly telling some of the things they had seen and accomplished, than simply to read about such persons in books that might after all be only "make believe"?

It was close on the eve of Christmas when the two pals thus descended on the surface of Tanjong Harbor, facing old Batavia city; but on account of the enervating heat, so different from conditions marking that day in Holland, the holiday seemed to lose much of its joyous nature; for who could think of rushing about, or exercising to any extent with the mercury above 100 Fahrenheit, and the sun so terrible that at midday almost everybody on the streets was forced to carry *pajongs,* which were white or colored paper or muslin parasols, intended to shield one's cranium from the fierce rays of the overhead sun?

When after a most enjoyable evening, Amos and Danny suggested that they had better be making for some hotel to spend the night, their kind hostess objected most earnestly, saying she had arranged to keep them over night, having a spare room ready. On the morrow, they might take time to accompany Mynherr to a hotel he could recommend; but not *that* night. Indeed, the *childer* would be disconsolate if their newfound friends abandoned them so soon, while she herself had made all arrangements for giving them an ideal Java breakfast, with everything from sugar and coffee down to the ingredients

for battercakes having been grown right on the wonderful island of which Batavia was the capital.

Amos started to object, thinking it too much to burden the good lady with such unexpected company; but Danny accepted for himself and partner, so there was nothing else to do but give in with a good grace; nor did either of them regret the decision in the least.

Danny had been the life of the party, and kept the children laughing and applauding with his jokes and "wisecracks." Being a bit of an actor among his many accomplishments, Danny won all hearts, and would never be forgotten by those whom he entertained so heartily.

In the cool of the early morning they had a wonderful breakfast, memories of which would haunt them for many a day. Later they said good-by for a time to the jolly little family and accompanied Mynherr downtown. He made his arrangements for a full day off and took them to a modest but scrupulously clean little caravansary, where they secured a room with bath, meaning to enjoy the luxury of several dips a day, to offset the depressing effect of that terrific heat.

The main street of Batavia, Government Square, or as it is known to the citizens of the city, *Koningsplein,* was close by, and walking up and down here they were able to get a comprehensive idea of what Batavia looked like on a

December morning. Their accommodating guide pointed out two distant cones that could be seen with the naked eye, since the air chanced to be unusually clear.

"*Salak* and *Gedah,* two volcanoes that in times long past must have been very active and harmful, although just at present peaceful, and apparently dead vents," he explained.

That caused Danny to recollect the shock of a previous night, when the sky in the west had assumed a fiery red hue that looked as though the end of the world might be near at hand, especially when accompanied by those savage grumblings under the quivering surface of the earth, and the usual tidal wave that always follows such a disturbance on islands of the sea.

"On the night of the twentieth of December, we were anchored in a bay connected with an island far to the east of here, an' 'bout to be attacked by some black head-hunters, when the earth trembled an' groaned; at about the same time we saw the sky in the west turn a furious red color, that came and went. Amos here was sure it must be a volcano a-spoutin' lava an' red-hot stones into the air, an' reckoned it might be that old cone at Krakatao startin' to bombard things again. Was he O.K. in his guess, Mynherr Hendrik?"

"It was a straight guess, I am obliged to tell you," replied the other, smilingly; "for we all

saw it from Batavia. Every household was on the flat roofs, or down in the streets watching the awesome display, and not a little fearful lest the foundations of Java should be shaken, as has happened more than a few times in past years. Yes, we know now Krakatao had once more broken loose, and that a most gorgeous spectacle was seen by those fortunate enough to be close to the island, that most famous volcano center on all the earth."

"Too bad that we hadn't been a few days ahead of our program," Danny lamented. "I'd've given a heap to set my lamps on a volcano lettin' off steam an' red-hot lava, not to mention spoutin' stones that were like fire. But better luck next time, old scout Amos."

"Well, all I can say about it," remarked Amos, blandly, "is that we were mighty lucky *not* to be spending the same night in the lee of that identical island, seeing what was coming off. In that case the chances are there'd be a couple of rash flyers, and a pretty fine ship, missing from their accustomed haunts. I'm satisfied the way things panned out. The blacks were scared off by the shaking of the earth and that great flaming light in the west; we managed to climb up to a high ceiling before the tidal wave came swooping down on our lagoon where we spent the night; and everything passed off just dandy. Excuse me from too close contact with a geyser that spouts

an endless amount of lava, ashes and red-hot stones two hundred feet up in the air."

"Huh! I subscribe to your sentiments, partner, every time," Danny hastened to say, with almost ludicrous energy, as though disliking to make out that his old-time reckless spirit was again showing its head.

They took a short excursion into the surrounding country, using Mynherr's big touring car to carry them over really fine roads. Thus inside of a few hours they were able to see a vast number of unique and interesting sights: learning how the savory Java coffee is grown, also many kinds of spices, as well as the already familiar fruits which they had sampled on the first morning of their stay, and numerous other species entirely strange to them.

Later on they made their way through a native compound, or *kampong,* and so learned how the Javanese lived when by themselves. After that they had a light lunch with Mynherr, who then took them to where their boat was securely housed, as he wished to look over the wonder ship that had carried these two adventurers over such magnificent stretches of terrain and ocean depths unscathed.

It was Danny with his persuasive tongue who managed to get their friend to accompany them on a short ride through the upper air currents, and see part of the island as well as the city of

his adoption spread out like a vast map far below, so that human beings, even when seen through glasses, really looked just about as tiny as common ants.

He pronounced it the one great thrill of his whole life, and declared he was already commencing to feel a gnawing desire to repeat the experiment at the very first opportunity—that is, unless the good *vrow* seriously objected to his imperiling his life by taking chances.

Danny of course managed to tell him what a grand surprise Mr. Carstairs had arranged for them at Singapore, where the latest in everything that pertained to a magnificent aërial craft awaited their coming; and, too, of course Danny also found it necessary to add, as he whimsically scratched his head after taking off his helmet:

"In his letter to Amos here, sent from New York, he mentioned that he had fixed up *two* fine surprises, which he hoped we'd like to beat the band. One of them is this bully new plane with two motors and a great cabin; but while I've badgered my brain like fun to try to guess the other surprise I don't get on to it worth a red cent. Mebbe now Amos here's got some sort o' idea, but he just keeps on sayin' he don't know a bit more'n there was in his letter, an' which he let me read clear through. Sometimes I'm dead sure he's got some sort o' notion as to what's in the wind; but he's mean enough to

keep me knockin' my poor head 'gainst a stone wall, an' own up beat to a frazzle."

Amos declined to be drawn into an argument, only smiled mysteriously and adroitly changed the subject, leaving poor Danny more perplexed than ever and grumbling to himself, because he must evidently remain in utter ignorance until such time as they landed at their destination.

They took supper at a restaurant, where although proprietor and waiters all spoke in Dutch, they managed to make their wants known, Amos having a smattering of the language, enough indeed to be able to recognize some familiar names among those of the dishes on the bill of fare and to point to them. Indeed, he had been advised by the good lady of the Dutch bungalow—at his request—as to the names of certain kinds of food, such as he and Danny would prefer; so they did not rise from the table hungry.

"Well, now, what next?" asked Danny, always resourceful when it came to laying out a promising program of amusements. "By the way, they've also got 'em here in Batavia, meanin' our American fillums; for I saw a flashy bill up in front of a squatty building off the big square announcing that the wonderful Charlie Chaplin would be flashed upon the screen to-night in his latest an' most laughable play. Let's go, partner. We sure don't want to hit the hay so early in the night, an' it ain't often we get a chance to

gaze on the contortions of our old friend, Charlie."

"*Contortions!* That's pretty good for you, old scout; though I wonder if Charlie'd agree. To be sure we must see that show—no telling when we'll get another chance, unless they have the latest hits at Singapore."

And so they laid out an hour or so of keen enjoyment, watching the inimitable Charlie do his various stunts, to the vast amusement of the polyglot audience, consisting of dark-skinned natives, bluff Dutch beaux and their "sweeties," and a general mixture of such strangers as chanced to be in hot Batavia.

CHAPTER XXI

FROM JAVA TO SUMATRA

Several days passed.

There being no hurry, and both of them wishing to see everything worth looking at, they arranged upon a settled policy, doing most of their moving around in the early hours of the morning, or else after the fiery sun had made good headway down the western heavens.

Another evening was spent at the cheery home of Mynherr Van Plank, a special invitation to supper having been extended by the good wife of their new friend. Danny was growing exceedingly fond of the younger members of the household and they of him; indeed, their sun seemed to rise and set in this merry young fellow whose stories would never be forgotten; and the best thing of it was they believed them to be all true.

"Somehow this makes me think of another family we met many moons back," Danny confided to his comrade that night, as they were being taken to their hotel by Mynherr's Malay chauffeur—one of few among his kind who had mastered the ways of the motor car and was really a creditable driver.

"Where was that?" demanded Amos; for indeed they had met such vast numbers of people during the time they were knocking around the world in the interests of scientific aviation—and Mr. Carstairs—that it was next to impossible for him to decide immediately upon an answer to Danny's comment.

"Remember the time you got into trouble with the boat as we were makin' for an open field landin'? It was over at old Tokio in Japan; an' we made somethin' o' a wreck o' the dandy Japanese garden of the very man we had on our books to look up—Mr. Leonard Hawkins—an' how he made us feel that it was really an *honor* to have such bully chaps drop down in his neat garden, an' play hob with it. His home life was a heap like that of this friend here in Batavia: splendid bunch of kids who cottoned to us like we might be in the same class as Lindbergh. Never will forget what a great time we had there; an' say, they acted like they were mighty sorry when we had to pull out, bein' on a hot-footed trip around the world just then."

Of course Amos remembered, for he too had often thought of that happy family, maintaining a true American home away off there in Japan, where Mr. Hawkins's diplomatic duties kept him year in and year out.

This was no new trick on Danny's part. He had a wonderful memory, and so many of the

thrilling happenings of the last year or two had made such a lasting impression on his mind that when he had nothing else to do he delighted in recalling them with all their near-tragic associations.

But now Amos was thinking of continuing their flight. They had about exhausted the strange sights of this remote outpost of civilization, at the other side of the world from California and home; and even Danny was eagerly counting the hours when they should be bidding good-by to Batavia and setting their course for Singapore.

Stores of every description had been placed aboard immediately after they had devoted an afternoon to taking Mynherr up and letting him experience his first ride among the clouds. On this occasion he had the thrill of a lifetime and a pleasure that would linger in his mind for many a day.

"We're all fixed out good and dandy, Amos, old pal," Danny was saying in his seductive way; "an' could skip off in the mornin' if you only said the word. It'd please me a heap to be on the jump once more. This heat is makin' me feel 'bout sick; an' there's cool air a-plenty up aloft, you know."

"Make your mind easy on that score, partner," he was assured; "we leave in the morning, with but one more night scheduled for a stop-over before reaching our port at Singapore."

At this thrilling news Danny evinced the utmost delight.

"I'll try an' stand it then to the finish, matey. We'll step up to say good-by to our friends this evenin' an' be early at the hangar. Time we got a move on, 'cause that Mr. Aufterheide's on his return trip from Shanghai, an' due to turn up here any day; then he'll want his hangar."

That afternoon they took another ride with Mynherr in his car to see how rice fields are irrigated, differently from the method employed in Japan and China. Danny having expressed a burning desire to listen to a native orchestra, a real "eat-'em-alive" *gammelang,* as Danny called it, Mynherr readily found an opportunity to oblige him; but after all he was soon satisfied and begged just as lustily to be led away, for the sounds he heard were so dreadful, in comparison with the music to which he was accustomed, that it was all he could do to refrain from clapping his hands over his ears, which action might have started a near-riot, since it would be looked upon as an insult.

On the following morning they were both astir before dawn. Breakfast was dispatched, and Mynherr arrived with his car to take them, with their hand luggage, over to where the amphibian rested safely in the Aufterheide hangar. Danny was heard to give a great sigh of relief after they ran the plane out and found everything in perfect

condition; for toward the end he had been oppressed by a dreadful fear lest something should occur at the last moment to cause a delay in their plans.

They shook hands with the genial Dutch manager, and when Amos pulled the gun they skipped over the little waves that indicated the presence of a pleasant breeze in the harbor, past the great docks where many steamships were daily taking on their cargoes of coffee and spices destined for western markets; and finally rising as might a wild goose on being disturbed from its slumbers.

So they made their start, and soon saw the Dutch capital of Java fade away in the hazy distance. Their course was due northwest, and if followed would after a time bring them in sight of another great island, that of Sumatra; also in the same class as Java, being a Dutch East India possession and given over almost entirely in its cultivated sections to the growing of spices and coffee.

How pleasant it was to feel that cool air blowing on their sunburned faces, and to know that as long as the flight continued they would be able to enjoy this luxury whenever they pleased.

Danny had expressed a keen desire to be able to say he had actually set foot on the soil of the three great island gardens of Holland, and Amos, not being averse to the idea, had agreed to its carrying out.

Accordingly, later on in the morning, when they found themselves passing over the shore line of Sumatra, he dropped down so that Danny could select a favorable spot where it would be safe to make a landing.

"There's a duck of a little bay ahead there, partner," the observer had explained when he made up his mind; "we c'n make the splash and then taxi over to that tongue o' land stretchin' out in a long curve. It's nearly free from trees an' bushes, so we could make certain no two-legged woolly-heads, or carnivorous wild animals might be creepin' up on us while we kicked our heels in the sand an' said howdy to Sumatra land."

A speedy survey convinced Amos that what Danny said was "all to the good"; accordingly they descended and were soon floating on the quiet waters of a lagoon. After that it was a small matter for them to taxi over close to the tongue of land and near its tip, where Danny quickly launched the diminutive, collapsible boat and paddled ashore, letting out a rope as he went.

After he had seen his chum make a landing Amos drew back the canvas boat, and followed, so that they stood together on the sandy beach, where Danny cavorted in his customary lively fashion, addressing humorous remarks to the island on which they had dropped, although he

explained his gyrations by declaring he was only endeavoring to get the "kinks" out of his benumbed legs.

"Huh! mighty near done with *this* crab act," he exclaimed with a grin of satisfaction; "soon have a com-mo-di-ous cabin all to ourselves, where we c'n sit without tyin' our legs up in knots, and bendin' our backs till a feller feels he's 'bout eighty years old. Which isn't sayin' any hard words 'bout this scrumptious old bus that's carried us faithfully over three continents an' then some. I still feel like takin' off my hat to *Old Glory II,* even if she is headed for the discard, so far's we're concerned."

They did not linger any length of time, though Danny started a fire, just to boast of having done so on such foreign soil. Once more they embarked, and proceeded to climb to a ceiling where the cool breezes held forth; even Danny, while wiping the prespiration from his red face, admitted he was satisfied just to set his foot on Sumatra, because he really had no use for such a blazing hot island.

On the previous afternoon while saying goodby to their Irish friend, Terence, they had urged him to accept a sum of money that would at least allow of a start on his way to the humble sod cottage, which was cherished in his warm Irish heart. So, too, had Amos interested Mynherr in the lad, who promised to try to find Terence a

berth on some steamer that sooner or later was destined to bring up in the Mersey at Liverpool, allowing him to cross easily over to Dublin, then down to Cork—and *home!*

After leaving the lagoon Amos headed to the northeast, intending to strike the coast of Borneo around a certain point which he had picked out on his well-thumbed chart. This civilized sector he figured was best calculated to serve their purpose of spending a last night *en route,* with the intention of finishing the long flight on the coming day, when the thriving metropolis of the Malacca Straits would be reached.

He had purposely selected this particular camping ground in order to avoid any sort of encounter with the natives. Danny had observed with more or less fervor that personally he had no desire whatever to make the acquaintance of those ferocious head-hunters who were said still to be found in some unfrequented parts of Borneo; and also admitted he was loath to run across a gorilla. Grizzly bears were bad enough, let alone a hairy beast that could twist the steel barrel of a rifle into knots, as he had read those powerful animals were able to do.

"All I know," he had mentioned with a shake of his head, "is that I haven't lost any gorilla; an' as for the black trophy-hunters, I ain't partic'lar to hand 'em this head o' mine; it may be a

cabbage head, but it's the only one I got, an' I reckon I need it in my business."

Along toward the middle of the afternoon they were hovering over land once more, with Danny scrutinizing each indentation, and watching for signs of Sukadana, near which town they expected to spend the last night of their present flight.

About 3 o'clock Danny announced the discovery of the rather large bay upon which the town rested, and which looked like a first-class harbor for boats of all descriptions.

"An' mebbe, if everything goes O.K.," Danny was saying, "we'll know by to-morrow night 'bout that surprise packet. Hot dog! I c'n hardly hold my hosses, I'm that crazy to lift the lid, an' find out what's what."

CHAPTER XXII

DANNY "CAMPS" ON BORNEO'S STRAND

"GET your gripper ready for business, Danny; we're headed down for keeps," Amos Green told his comrade, as he tilted up his boat for a volplane dive.

"But it was over there a mile or so to the left I figgered would be the best place to stick it out in," objected the other as they shot toward the surface of the wide bay.

"That's all right, buddy; later on we'll taxi across—after it gets a bit dark, so no one will see what we're doing, you understand."

"Hot dog! I'm on to your game, old sport—you reckon on keepin' our roostin' spot a secret from the mob, eh, what? Now that's what I call safety first."

They alighted softly and glided over the surface, the din of exhaust and whirling propeller having been suddenly hushed.

"Get busy, matey!" suddenly called out the pilot as he executed a dexterous half turn, so as to fetch the nose of his craft around to face the slight wind that was curling up tiny wavelets on the bay.

In this fashion then they came to a complete stop with the island of Borneo off their larboard quarter and close by.

Danny, as he commenced carrying out certain duties connected with this last lay-over, cast numerous inquisitive glances toward the distant town, as though he fully anticipated discovering some move announcing the coming of unwelcome visitors. It was easy to guess that the racket made by their motor when drawing near their objective point would have been noticed by many persons, since it must be of a character seldom if ever heard in this region.

"They're comin' all right, partner," he announced some fifteen minutes later; "reg'lar *swarm* o' boats in the bargain. Mebbe it's a whole lot like the circus strikin' a town out on the western border, with everybody crazy to see the animal cages, clowns, elephants an' camels, girlies in spangled skirts an' all that sorter stuff. Glory be! but I sure do hope they ain't movin' out this way meanin' to 'scort us to the hoosegow as tramps o' the clouds. One never knows how these cops in foreign places are goin' to carry on."

"Don't worry about that sort of thing," Amos told him. "We're bound to treat them decently, but make out that we're not able to understand all they say; but if they get too curious we'll let

them believe we mean to stick around here for some time."

"I get what you mean, Amos. I'll manage to ask if they've got any halfway decent mechanics in their old burg, who would undertake to do a little job o' repairin' a motor that's weakenin' on us. How does that gag strike you, boy?"

"I'm leaving it up to you to pull the wool over their eyes, Danny; but try it out only if they show signs of getting too fresh."

"That's settled then," said the other, at the same time managing to let his repeating rifle lie in plain sight, as though to signify that the crew of the strange airship had come on their journey with a full-fledged armory aboard, thus suggesting their capacity for defending themselves—Danny evidently taking it for granted the curious ones could accept a plain hint. Soon the boats began to arrive, and they proved to run the gamut of all types of small craft, from those driven by some sort of motor to native boats manned by nut-brown crews, and with Malay *serangs.*

They soon formed a ring around the anchored flying boat, with every occupant leaning over the side, eyes round with wonder. Danny grinned, and nodded as though in sheer good nature; when some of the young Dutch occupants of a motor-driven boat called out and asked questions in a queer mixture of pidgin English, Danny jab-

bered away to suit his particular fancy, emitting volleys of such jargon as he had picked up along the Rio Grande country, and in contact with Mexican vineyard workers in California, also interlarding this with pet wisecracks, and altogether carrying on in such a ridiculous fashion that Amos had to turn his face away to prevent his broad smiles from being seen.

At least the trick seemed to work, which was the main thing. Danny was secretly worried lest the boats press in so close that contact with one of the amphibian's wide-stretching wings might result in some serious damage such as would necessitate a long stop-over.

When after a time he saw that the motor boat manned by a trio of grinning, stout, red-faced young Dutch amateur sailors, evidently out for a good time, was constantly drawing in closer to the wing that had only recently been repaired, Danny changed his tone, speaking threateningly, and even giving suggestive looks toward his gun lying in plain sight; at which the aggressors jabbered among themselves, and then, as if thinking better of their evident intention to start a bit of rough-house sport with these strangers, they backed their clumsy craft a dozen yards or so further off.

Amos was going about his customary duties as though perfectly satisfied to leave the talkfest entirely in the hands of his chum; though he kept

a wary eye upon the circle of boats, not wishing to be taken unawares.

After a while, as Amos had hoped would be the case, the three lads seemed to grow tired of listening to Danny's voluble but rather vague chatter, for they started their engine, swung around in a half circle, and headed back toward the distant town, calling out in pure Dutch as they went, also waving their hands toward the strangers.

"Huh! said they'd see us again 'fore long," Danny told his companion; "which might mean they expect to sneak out here after night comes along, an' play some dirty trick on us. Such chaps are always ready for a lark, an' don't care a whoop who suffers from their fun. There, the rest of the bunch are startin' to quit, though that Malay captain does look like he'd be glad to steal our outfit, given half a chance. A hard crowd, partner, believe me, an' here's hopin' we'll not run up against 'em between now an' mornin'."

"We got off better than I expected," was the only comment Amos made, which proved that he himself had not been free from fears of trouble.

It was too hot to think of doing anything like preparing a heavy supper; all that could well be left to the time, now close at hand, when they might find themselves settled down at Singapore, possibly for some weeks, as they accustomed themselves to handling their new and far superior

boat, and made all needful preparations for the next adventure on their program.

Thankfully they saw the burning sun kiss the low horizon and prepare to drop out of range of their vision, when they might expect the heated air to become somewhat more bearable. Danny had of course divested himself of his close helmet and goggles as soon as they touched the water; and since then by degrees various articles of his working attire had also been discarded until now he lounged there as lightly clad as possible without actually stripping.

"Gee whiz!" he was groaning (and it appeared as though he could not even bear to make use of his pet exclamation, so suggestive of heat did it seem); "this here is sure the limit; an' I'll melt away in grease if things don't improve soon. A cold drink for me, an' just a handful o' them little Dutch buns we brought from Batavia. Couldn't eat another mouthful if we had the orderin' of a meal from the best restaurant in old San Diego. Just want to lie here, an' suck in little breaths o' air, so's to keep from floppin'."

"Well," remarked Amos, "I'm going to suggest that if we mean to step ashore here, so as to say we've stood on Borneo soil, it might be better to do it now than later. Once we change our anchorage it would hardly be wise to go to moving around; and along toward morning it might seem the best thing for us to do would be

to pull up stakes and clear out before sunrise."

"Might's well be killed for a sheep as a lamb, I reckon," groaned Danny, not showing any great elation over the idea, such was his exhaustion from the heat. "Tell me what you want done, partner, and I'll try to stir up enough energy to fill the bill. But, whee! it's some hot around this section."

They were close enough to the shore to admit of making use of the little "punkinseed"; and Amos figured that it would be safe for both of them to land, since after looking in every direction he could discover no signs of hovering peril. But when Danny led off in the collapsible craft he was careful to carry his rifle, being haunted by visions of that squatty, hairy, powerful type of monkey known as a gorilla, or "Old Man of the Woods," as big-game hunters sometimes called the monster.

The double landing was carried out just as easily as at any other time, and Danny, after all, changed his mind with the coming of cooler wisps of air; for he actually made a little fire and cooked a pot of coffee, just to say he had really and truly "camped" on the island of Borneo, land of the notorious head-hunters, and where the most dreaded of all wild animals has its *habitat.*

Neither of them showed any particular desire to linger long, and Danny, indeed, displayed plain signs of nervousness, being addicted to jumping

at the least sound; he kept his firearm within reach every minute of the time they were ashore. So Amos made him go aboard, lingering a brief time afterwards himself as if to show his mate he was not suffering from any sense of threatening trouble; after which he, too, paddled over to the amphibian.

Although the moon was shining, its light was so deceptive that even the keenest eye would have found it impossible to see beyond a radius of a hundred yards. After waiting another hour, and clouds having meanwhile dimmed the orb of night, Amos proposed effecting the planned change of base.

When the anchor had been raised they taxied along as softly as possible to the point decided upon. Sufficient distance having been covered they once more halted and connected with the muddy bottom by means of their anchor.

"How 'bout keepin' watch an' watch the rest o' the night, buddy?" asked Danny. "Somehow I didn't kinder like the way that bunch o' Dutch kids acted as they hauled off for town; I bet you two cents they've gone an' hatched up some sort o' dirty trick to play on us. What say, old pal?"

"Safety first, always, buddy," Amos told him. "We can't afford to take any chance of getting our crate injured, even as a prank of fun-loving Dutch youngsters; boys are pretty much the same the world around, thinking only of having the

laugh on others, without counting the cost. Yes, we'll keep a weather eye open and make sure they don't catch us napping on our post."

This was no new thing for them, and it was all arranged without any sign of trouble; but the night wore along and when the stars announced that dawn could not be far distant they had not been in any way disturbed.

"Good-by old night," Danny was singing out as he saw a gray line in the east gradually expand and its edges begin to display pink and gold; "next stop Singapore—everybody out—get your luggage ready in the aisles! Whoopee!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SECOND SURPRISE

"Not quite so fast, brother," Amos advised his pal; "there's really no great hurry for us to get off this morning, so we'll taxi over to that sheltered spot a mile or so off to the left, where I mean to take a look at that cut finger of yours, daubing a little iodine on the same to stave off infection. We can't afford to take any chances, you understand, boy."

"S'pose so," grumbled Danny, who had been sucking his left forefinger off and on ever since he injured it that morning; "but I've had many a worse slash than this and it always healed up."

"Just the same I mean to do that painting job. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Let's get busy, Danny."

Accordingly, after they had crossed over to the smooth water back of the point and once again anchored, Amos took from a locker the little packet containing the few but vastly important remedies, liniments and gauze tape for surgical purposes, which they had carried, but with very little use for it, ever since their wanderings over the world's surface commenced.

"No aviator should be without such a compact first-aid kit," Amos was saying while using the tiny brush in connection with the iodine; "it's inexpensive and complete; lots of times such a handy medicinal assortment would save a human life. Remember you had a scratch from a dying Manchurian tiger's infected claws over there in Asia, when we were on our quick jump around the world by plane? Only for my painting it with permanganate of potassium you might have had blood poisoning set in, and that would've been the last of Danny Cooper."

"That's the truth, old fellow, an' I own up it's all to the good. Here we have different kinds o' gauze bandages, adhesive plaster, absorbent cotton, with sterilized gauze to come next to the wound."

"Yes," continued the other, impressively, "and besides the phial of iodine there are cathartic pills, bicarbonate of soda for indigestion, treating burns and such like; also the tiny clinical thermometer and a hot water bag. It all occupies but little space and may be worth a thousand times what it cost. Let that dry for a few minutes—no, it mustn't be wrapped up, unless you want it to blister and be a fresh source of annoyance. Now we'll get out that little gem of an alcohol Jewell stove we've carried so long and cook some coffee; because our water is getting a bit stale."

Fortunately the surface of the bay back o that sheltering arm of land was so smooth ther was no difficulty in coaxing the little stove t work after its pump had started things. In du time the coffee was boiling, and invigorating th two occupants of the plane with its appetizin odors.

They had their limited breakfast and after wards made a second pot of coffee which was t be poured into their vacuum jug for use durin the day; and Danny shook his head on findin that must constitute their only means for quench ing thirst. Evidently he looked for more or les suffering, knowing how thirst was augmented i such a hot region with a blazing sun overhea for a long stretch of hours.

They had taken note of the bay in the directio of the town, ready to make off at the first sign o any craft heading toward them, but this emer gency did not arise until they had completed thei arrangements. Then seeing a motor boat comin along that looked similar to the clumsy craf manned by those three young Dutch amateu sailors of the preceding afternoon, Amos said was time to "vamose."

They took off without the slightest difficulty an were soon following a course close on northwes by-west, which Amos figured would eventuall take them to Singapore. The town of Sukadan was soon lost to sight and shortly afterwards eve

the shores and heavy forests of Borneo faded from their vision.

Danny was not long in opening a little "talk-fest," for as a rule he did not seem to be happy unless discussing some problem with which his brain had been wrestling, and which he had faith to believe his long-headed partner could readily solve.

"I was just thinkin', Amos," he observed, "that if ever we published an account of all these bully exploring trips of ours, we'd have a heap o' trouble gettin' folks to b'lieve 'em. They'd laugh an' say it was all moonshine—that no plane could make such long flights without crashin' or havin' the engine get knockin' and goin' bad. It'd be only a silly fool who'd take any stock in such Sindbad-the-Sailor sort of stuff."

"Oh! I don't know about that," the other hastened to say with a smile, for he could guess what Danny was fishing for; "you know I've been keeping all sorts of records to prove what dependable machines the builders in America are now putting out from their factories. There was one boat running on an air-mail route up in Alaska that covered a long trip daily, and for an entire year it kept on the job, counting up between 100,00 and 200,000 miles without any sign of trouble and no serious accident—and it was going strong at last accounts.

"Then, too, think of what's been done by indi-

vidual pilots, beating our record all to smash; though I admit we ran ten times as great risks because we did most of our stunts over long-distance flights, and in such fields as Arctic ice floes, burning deserts in Africa, over mighty mountain chains like the Andes down in South America, and crossed the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

"In the last paper I had at Sydney I read about the splendid record of a Lieutenant Dyer of the Navy, who has just won the Herbert Schiff trophy for flying 1,251 hours *without a single accident,* so you see how both planes and pilots have by degrees reached what I'd call a high standard of efficiency."

"Yes, and here's where the joke comes in," snapped Danny, exultantly; "for I was readin' in that same paper a telegram from our good old San Diego tellin' how Major Carl Spatz with four others in the cabin o' the *Question Mark* were plannin' to stay up so's easily to beat the record, by makin' contact with another boat, an' refuelin' while in the air! Say, don't that make you laugh —doin' just what a pair o' galoots, by name Danny Cooper'nd Amos Green put through many moons ago, over Hawaii, when on their non-stop flight from California to Japan? Oh! well, it's all in the game, an' I sure hope our old friend Major Spatz stays up so's to beat everything in sight; an' makes a landin' without anything hap-

penin' to break his record. He sure deserves everything he gets out o' that big stunt."

After that Danny fell silent, having accomplished the end he had in view, and drawn out the information he hoped to obtain. Through the whole morning the steady and ceaseless working of the faithful motor was like sweet music to Danny's ear.

"Say what you will, partner," he observed at one time; "no matter what make of engines we're goin' to have in our new bus, they'll never do better work than this dandy we've tested under all sorts o' conditions an' weather; I take off my lid to her and say she can't be beat. Hear her hum, will you? I only hope the new pair'll be as dependable an' of the same stripe."

As he had done on previous days when working under such a scorching sun, Pilot Amos kept his boat at a certain altitude where they could avoid the worst of that distressing tropical heat; but even at that before noon arrived Danny was tossing off a portion of his clothes, and making frequent little contacts with the vacuum jar, just to "moisten his throat," which was as dry as the Sahara Desert they had crossed within the last year.

As the contents of this receptacle began to run low and lower, both flyers found themselves suffering from thirst. It seemed as though they could easily drink gallons of water where only

drops were available. Danny kept figuring out about how much longer this was apt to last, and shook his head dolefully upon ascertaining that almost a third of the last lap of eight hundred miles—more or less—of their great flight still remained to be covered, during most of which time they would be parched with thirst!

How slowly the minutes seemed to move along! Danny, full of eager expectation with the puzzle of that second grand surprise so near explanation really believed he had never in all his former experiences known time to drag so exasperatingly.

Now it had come down to about the last hundred miles, and if anything he was feeling the strain more than ever; indeed, even the knowledge that they were then skirting the southernmost edge of the far-famed China Sea did not seem to allay his impatience a particle.

"Hot dog!" he told himself, "seems like when a feller is perishin' for a nice cold drink, or a raspberry sundae or somethin' to cool his burnin' tongue, all seas look alike in his eyes. I wonder, now—could it be possible we've gone an' overrated the distance, an' that's really *land* I'm lookin' at ahead there—but mebbe it's on'y one o' them mirages we used to get on the Mohave Desert, where you b'lieve you see a gurglin' stream o' fine water, which always keeps bubblin' along

just out o' a poor chap's reach, till he loses his head an' goes loco."

Determined to know the worst, he had Amos hand over the stick, and take a look; great was Danny's joy when his buddy corroborated the pleasing fact that it certainly *was* land, and no doubt Singapore itself.

"Oh! joy! how glad I am to hear you say that, Amos!" burst from Danny's quivering lips. "Couldn't you give her another notch, an' make port a bit sooner?"

"Not a thing doing, old sea scout; I've been pushing her for the last two hours, and right now she's doing a hundred and thirty. Just keep a stiff upper lip and we'll drop down soon in Singapore Harbor, the race run and everything lovely. You'll get all the cool drinks you want before long, give you my word."

Soon they could make out the city of the Malacca Straits without the aid of the glasses; and finally, after circling the harbor, Amos headed his plane for the water. Once they floated on the bay Danny gave a cheer as if happiness had again enthroned itself within his buoyant heart.

They busied themselves about the plane for the next half hour, when the eagle-eyed navigator announced that a motor boat was rapidly approaching. Both watched its coming with interest, for Amos did not expect to meet any agent of Mr.

Carstairs at this point, meaning to attend to everything personally.

"There's a gent seated in the wicker armchair on the forward deck, an' readin' a newspaper that kinder hides his face," announced Danny Cooper. "Now he's let the sheet drop, an' I c'n see—oh! my stars!—hot dog!—can I b'lieve my eyes?—Amos, Amos, don't you see *him?*—the finest man that ever was on the face o' this earth—our backer, Mr. Carstairs, an' away out here in Singapore, when we believed all the while he was still back in little old New York! Hot dog, again, I'm sayin', when I begin to get a grip on the fact that this is the second big, big surprise he went an' fixed up for his boys—God bless him!"

CHAPTER XXIV

ALL SNUG AT SINGAPORE

Danny, chancing to take a quick glance toward his chum, discovered a broad smile on the other's face that somehow aroused his suspicions.

"Hot dog! See here, did *you* know all along that he was plannin' to give us the biggest an' best surprise ever? Tell me that, Amos," he demanded.

"He didn't take me into his secret. If I made a few guesses, just as you did, Danny, perhaps I came a bit closer to the truth—that's all."

Amos was already waving his hand wildly toward the approaching motor boat, and Danny hastened to follow suit. It was really one of the happiest moments in both of their lives, when they thus saw the beloved smiling face of the man who had been growing to be even more than a Big Brother to them.

Soon he was alongside, and they managed to clamber aboard the boat, to squeeze his extended hands most heartily.

"Took you a little by surprise, did I, boys? Couldn't wait until you got back to the States again. Was feeling fine, and suddenly made up

my mind to meet you over here, so as to show you the new boat which, by the way, has arrived, and you shall have the pleasure of superintending its assembling. It's a magnificent big Fokker, with two Whirlwind engines, each capable of developing 200 horse power!"

"Hot dog! Whoopee! think of how we've come up in the world, will you? All the comforts of home in the bargain, I bet six cents to a cookie!" was the exuberant way in which the delighted Danny greeted this astounding announcement.

"Just wait and see," replied the happy Mr. Carstairs; "but you deserve everything that money and affection can do for you. There never could be two manlier and more capable youngsters than Amos Green and Danny Cooper; I'm prouder of you than words can tell, and anticipate having the time of my life while here in your company, hearing all about your latest flights, and watching you get this new ship in condition for your next attempt at beating a record."

"What's the program for gettin' ashore, sir?" asked Danny, eagerly; "my legs feel like they're tied up in knots; an' yes, it's true that I'm fairly bustin' with eagerness to lamp that wonderful new bus."

"Everything has been arranged, and we'll soon have you on solid ground," came the answer. "I know full well how it feels to be cooped up in such a small cockpit for twelve or twenty hours at a

stretch. I'm meaning to take you with me right now, after you've bundled up your most important papers and possessions. You're both wondering, I'm sure, just how I managed to get here before you; that is a story for another time; but a plane had something to do with it, for I flew from London to Cairo in Egypt, caught the steamer for Bombay; then I passed around Ceylon, coming on to Singapore. Oh! I had a confederate in New York who mailed several letters to you, which I had written ahead for the purpose of hiding my movements. It's all been a game I've greatly enjoyed; but the last few days have sorely tried my patience. I was so worried about you; and the cables from New York, sent after your own messages arrived, were so scant, so unsatisfactory. But it's all past now and I'm feeling as happy as you over our meeting."

They soon made things snug aboard the anchored amphibian and accompanied Mr. Carstairs to the city, where his first act was to send a number of reliable men, whom he must have engaged previously for the purpose, to get *Old Glory II* ashore.

"What's to be done with our old reliable ship, sir?" asked the always curious Danny. "We think a heap of her, I want to say; and even if we're graduated from the single-motor class we'll never forget such a stanch old friend."

"That's all settled, Danny," the gentleman

told him. "I had planned to have her crated and shipped back to San Diego, but since arriving here something occurred to cause me to change my mind. Fact is, by sheer accident I ran across an old buddy of mine, by name Andy Hopkins, with whom I made many a bombing flight along the French front. We shared the same blanket and went hungry in company. It was a great delight for me to run across him again, for I had lost all track of the boy some years ago.

"He's been taking up parties in a terribly racketty and ancient bus that he got hold of when the former owners were afraid to fly in it again. I'm meaning to hand over to him your late ship as a little expression of my affection, and because of my memories of the thrilling times we enjoyed together."

"That makes my mind easy, sir," said Amos, heartily. "I've been bothered ever since I had your letter telling us about the new emphibian—which we are calling *Adventure*—what was to become of *Old Glory II.* Tell your old pal, please, that we're mighty glad he's to have the handling of our late boat. He'll find that Caminez engine as dependable as they make motors, even the Whirlwind type I'm meaning to include; for when a thing is absolutely faultless you couldn't well find anything better."

"To-morrow," continued Mr. Carstairs, "after you've got your legs in decent trim again, we'll

have the crates containing your new ship taken to the hangar I've secured close to the water, and set the mechanics at work under your supervision. Until then you must rest content, and stoke up with some decent food, besides securing a good night's sleep at my hotel, where I'm about to take you as soon as I get this boat moving for your anchorage. I'm hardly able to wait, my eagerness is so great to hear an account of the two flights you've put through since we last met. And then, too, I'm holding back another little surprise that I hope will give you at least half the pleasure it does me."

At that Danny perked up and grinned.

"Let me have just one guess, Mr. Carstairs!" he exclaimed. "You're meanin' to stick around here all the time we're gettin' the new ship assembled. Mebbe, too, you're figgerin' on bein' aboard when we're trying out her paces, an' gettin' 'customed to handlin' a twin-motored boat, with a *real* cabin, an' mebbe sleepin' accommodations in the bargain, eh, what, sir?"

"Good enough for you, Danny, as far as you've gone; but there's still more to follow!" said the gentleman, smiling broadly.

"Hot dog! you sure have got me all balled up, sir," spluttered Danny, helplessly.

"Perhaps it might help you to guess the conundrum," began Mr. Carstairs, "if I mentioned the fact that this new Fokker boat has take-down cots

aboard for *three* persons, one more than you doubtless figured would be the case!"

Danny fairly gasped and seemed to lose his breath for the moment; but his face was one wide grin, while his eyes sparkled like diamonds.

"Great Jupiter! you must mean you're figgerin' on keepin' us company on that next jump of ours—over the top of the Himalayas, an' down to Calcutta—is *that* what's in the wind, Mr. Carstairs, sir?"

"Well, I confess I've been hugging that possibility to my heart, boys; that is, if you could stand for having a passenger aboard, who would probably be only an encumbrance rather than an asset; but I'm feeling so fit once more, and have become so eager to see just how you manage to carry through on one of these thrilling flights you've been taking, that the temptation has really become irresistible. Would you mind if I did occupy that third berth, lads?"

Amos seized his hand and pressed it with great zeal.

"Mind, do you say, sir?" he exclaimed, with a huskiness in his voice; "why, we would be the proudest and happiest chaps alive just to have you along; and Danny will agree with me that your very presence is bound to be a great inspiration to us. Many's the time we've talked over that idea, and wished you felt able to take one long spin with us—it would be the greatest thing

that ever happened, I give you my word, sir."

"Same here," echoed Danny, thrilled by the thought; for Mr. Carstairs was the one man he respected more than any other on earth.

"Then we'll see how I'm feeling when you are all fixed, ready to jump off; for to tell you the truth, somehow the idea of being able to fly over the Himalayas has been the one wild dream of my life; but which I had given up as hopeless years back. In your company, and aboard so comfortable a ship as the new design Fokker, it appeals to me once more with irresistible force. Yes, we'll see, and if I don't get cold feet I shall hope to make this venture in your company, so as to get a bit of the old thrill once more."

And all that day, so delighted were both young aviators at all these happenings, that their faces wore set smiles; and every time they exchanged glances it was to nod their heads and chuckle—this was certainly well worth waiting for, yes, and enduring earthquakes, threatening attacks from bushboys and head-hunters, tidal waves and all the other hovering perils of the late flight.

As they anticipated being in Singapore for several weeks, they showed no impatience to see the sights of that polyglot city of the Malacca Straits, which, indeed, could not be so very different from other places they had already visited. Their first need was to secure some worth-while "grub" as Danny always termed it, and then a decent sleep

in a real bed. Besides, Mr. Carstairs was hungry for the details of their last adventure, and Amos could spin the yarn, aided and abetted by Danny, so as to satisfy this easily understood curiosity.

On the morrow they would buckle down to business and have the crated cabined and twin-motored Fokker transported to the hangar, where the work of assembling its various parts would be started.

Danny was the "happy lad," as he told his pal many times a day—with a layoff of some weeks ahead, plenty of "forage" to satisfy the demands of his ever hungry "tummy," excellent motion picture theaters, with the latest triumphs from Hollywood on exhibition, day and night—what more could he yearn for he wanted to know?—then that wonderful big ship, to be gradually built up day by day; and, best of all, the promise of Mr. Carstairs' company on the coming stupendous flight over the top of the world.

So here we may leave them, eagerly anticipating all manner of good times, with what might turn out to be the crowning event of their adventurous flights looming up just beyond.

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